EUSTACE ADAMS --- F. R. BUCKLEY

15¢

Adventure

A POPULAR PUBLICATION

DECEMBER

THE TENDERFOOT OF NAIROBI

by GORDON MacCREAGH

FRANK GRUBER

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I'll help you give fine gifts. Tell me what you want—put a dollar bill in an envelope with your name, address, occupation and a few other facts about yourself. I'll send your selection for approval and 10-day trial. If you are not satisfied that you have received good, honest value send it back and I'll promptly return your dollar. If satisfied pay in 10 small monthly payments.

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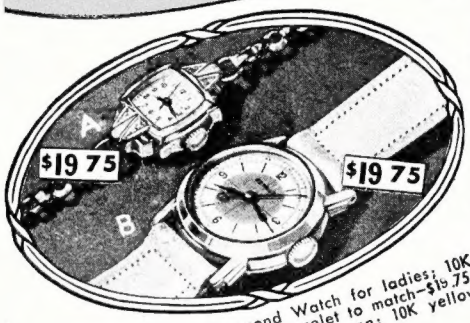

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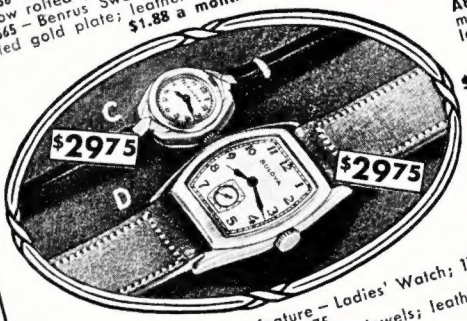

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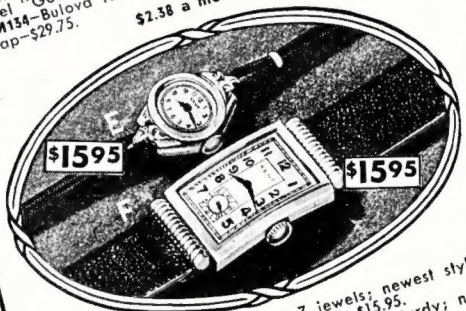

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$29.75
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$2.88 a month

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MAIL ORDER DIVISION OF FINLAY STRAUS, Inc.
Dept. 10-M 1670 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

HE THOUGHT HE WAS LICKED— THEN A TIP GOT BILL A GOOD JOB!

MY RAISE DIDN'T COME THROUGH, MARY EVERYTHING LOOKS SO HOPELESS
IT ISN'T HOPELESS, BILL. WHY DON'T YOU TRY RADIO. TOM GREEN IS DOING WELL. TALK TO HIM
BILL, JUST MAILING THAT COUPON GAVE ME A QUICK START TO SUCCESS IN RADIO. MAIL THIS ONE TONIGHT. RADIO'S STILL A YOUNG GROWING FIELD
TOM'S RIGHT. AN UNTRAINED MAN HASN'T A CHANCE. I'M GOING TO TRAIN FOR RADIO TOO. IT'S TODAY'S FIELD OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR GOOD PAY
U.S. MAIL
TRAINING AT HOME FOR RADIO IS PRACTICAL AND I'M GETTING ALONG FAST
SOON I CAN START FIXING RADIOS
THERE'S NO END TO THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WELL TRAINED TECHNICIANS
OR WORK ON LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEMS
OR GET A JOB IN A BROADCASTING STATION
YOU SURE KNOW RADIO. MY SET NEVER SOUNDED BETTER
THANKS! THAT'S $10 EXTRA I'VE MADE THIS WEEK IN SPARE TIME
OH BILL, IT'S WONDERFUL. YOU'VE GONE AHEAD SO FAST IN RADIO
I HAVE A GOOD FULL TIME JOB NOW—AND A BRIGHT FUTURE IN RADIO AND TELEVISION

I Trained These Men

Chief Operator Broadcasting Station

Before I completed your lessons, I obtained my Radio Broadcast Operator's license and immediately joined Station WMPC where I am now Chief Operator.

HOLLIS F. HAYES
327 Madison St.
Lapeer, Michigan

Service Manager for Four Stores

I was working in a garage when I enrolled with N. R. I. I am now Radio service manager for the M——— Furniture Co. for their four stores.

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119 Pebble Court
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I am doing spare time Radio work, and I am averaging from $700 to $850 a year. Those extra dollars mean so much—the difference between just barely getting by and living comfortably.

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$200 to $300 a Month in Own Business

For the last two years I have been in business for myself making between $200 and $300 a month. Business has steadily increased. I have N. R. I. to thank for my start in this field.

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300 W. Texas Ave.
Goose Creek, Texas

I WILL TRAIN YOU AT HOME *in your spare time for a* GOOD JOB IN RADIO

J. E. SMITH, President National Radio Institute Established 25 Years

If you can't see a future in your present job; feel you'll never make much more money, if you're in a seasonal field, subject to lay offs, IT'S TIME NOW to investigate Radio. Trained Radio Technicians make good money, and you don't have to give up your present job or leave home to learn Radio. I train you at home nights in your spare time.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make $30, $40, $50 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make $30, $40, $50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make $5 to $10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, Police, Aviation, Commercial Radio; Loudspeaker Systems, Electronic Devices are other fields offering opportunities for which N. R. I. gives the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open good jobs soon.

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The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets—start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your Course I send plans and directions which have helped many make $5 to $10 a week extra in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. YOU ALSO GET A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL, ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

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Act Today! Mail the coupon for my 64-page book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my Course in Radio and Television; shows more than 100 letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope or paste on penny postcard—NOW!

J. E. Smith, President
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Washington, D. C.

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THIS BOOK has shown hundreds how to MAKE MORE MONEY

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AGE.....

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

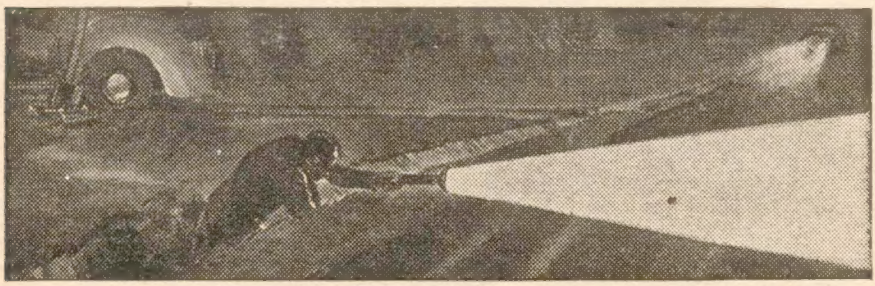
CITY..... STATE.....

"MY CRIES WERE WHISPERS AS MY LIFE EBBED!"

A true experience of P. S. NICHOLLS, *South Bend, Ind.*

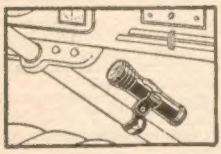
"LATE ONE NIGHT, returning from a fishing trip, I dozed at the wheel of my car while going at a fast clip," writes Mr. Nicholls. "Suddenly there was a blinding crash!

"MY CAR HAD VEERED off the road and smashed head on into a tree. My throat was gashed and bleeding badly. I was able only to whisper—and seemed doomed to die in the inky darkness. Then . . .



". . . I REMEMBERED MY FLASHLIGHT! Somehow I managed to get it from my tackle box and crawl weakly back to the road. Quickly the bright beam of the flashlight, waved in my feeble grasp, stopped a motorist, who took me to a hospital just in time. There is no doubt that I owe my life to dependable 'Eveready' *fresh* DATED batteries!

(*Signed*) *P. S. Nicholls*"



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JANUARY ISSUE ON SALE DECEMBER 10TH

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 104, No. 2 for December, 1940 Best of New Stories

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He was six feet of raw Scots lad, and he wanted no trouble in Africa—but when Africa leaped round him with black murder and blacker tricks, we'el—'twas time a Scotsman got busy.

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Cover by Stockton Mulford
Headings by Hamilton Greene, I. B. Hazelton and Peter Kuhlhoff
Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to Lost Trails will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Albert D. Rounds, lost since about 1914, was born in Sioux Falls, So. Dakota, on Sept. 23, about 1893. Last heard from by his youngest brother, Don, in 1914, from Necatur, Iowa. If Mr. Rounds is living, he will learn something to his material advantage by immediately communicating with Julian C. Hammack, Counsellor at Law, Munsey Bldg., Washington, D. C.

My twin brother disappeared in August, 1940. He is Donald J. Smith. Get in touch with me at Fort Ord, Calif., in Co. E, 19th Engineers. David E. Smith.

Wanted information of J. C. Johnson, born in Cairo, Ill., July 24, 1902; attended Elmwood School. Father was a steamboat man, Christian or Crispen Johnson. Write H. L. Beasley, mgr., The Hobby Shop, Centralia, Ill.

About eleven years ago I knew Ned Dixie in Belmont, Mass. Anyone having any knowledge of his whereabouts kindly contact Robert G. Lindsay, 133 Fenno St., Revere, Mass.

David Delauie, pronounced De-law-ya—was in Marines at Great Lakes in 1923-24; discharged in Quantico, Va.; worked as bridge riveter; was going to Utica, N. Y. when discharged. Would like to hear from him. L. A. Pratt, 3512 Lake Park Av., Chicago, Ill.

Clayton Isabel and Red Lewis, write me at once—Bill LaRue, Parrottsville, Tenn.

Would like to hear from Kenneth Sublette, Robert Livingston, Ben Covington, the Gorman Brothers, or anyone from Lytton Springs, 1914-15; also Fuzzy Bell, Carl McLain, Eldridge Metzger or anyone from George Jr. Republic, Chino, Cal. Also anyone from the 15th Regiment Guard Co. (aviation) 1920. "Soapy" Leonard was the company commander. Sheppard was the "C O". Jimmy Tarpley, 1530 Victory Blvd., Glendale, Cal.

I should like to contact any of the translators who served with me in the Bureau of Naval Intelligence (Cable Censorship) at 20 Broad St., New York City, during the first World War.—G. M. Patison, P. O. Box 128, Hollywood, Cal.

Have two brothers and two sisters, a mother past seventy-five, a dad of eighty-two. All interested in the attempt to contact a missing brother. Information wanted of George Verner Richards, born on farm in Monroe Co., Carleton, Mich., age 54, missing from Ann Arbor, Mich., since 1923. Was successful garage operator. May be in Canada, most likely in garage, or gas and oil business at this time. Was a reader of *Adventure*. Anyone knowing will please advise Vern's brother. Address Winn V. Richards, Old Moscow Tavern Antique Shop, Moscow, Mich.

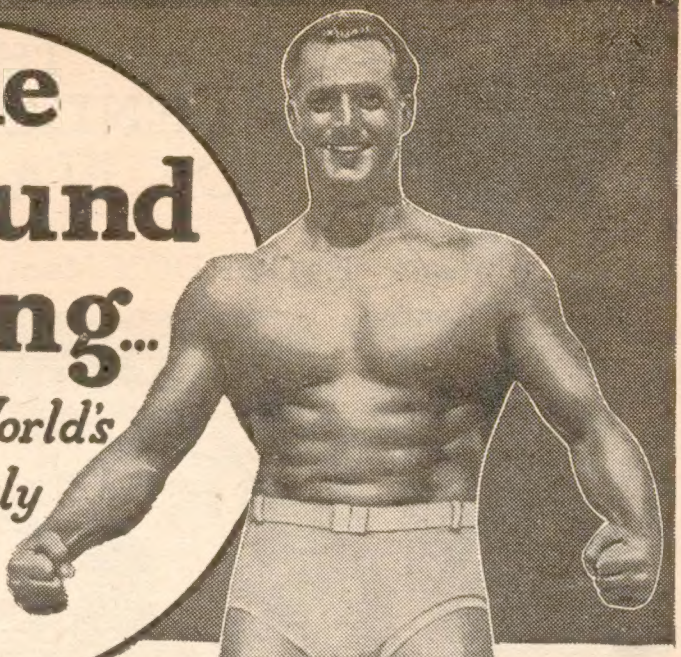
In 1914, I located a long lost brother through "Lost Trails." Will you run the following for me?—Roscoe. I. Smith born in Nickerson, Kansas, March 12, 1889. Sometimes known as Art Smith or Frank Smith. Please write your brother Harry C. Smith, 3820 Flower St., Bell, Calif. My father is very old now and while we did find one brother through your magazine in 1914 and have stayed in touch ever since, the one lost sheep means more to my father than the others.

John Beardsley and Marion French, if alive, please communicate with 66 Wall St., Pontiac, Mich.; an old friend from Camp Columbia, Cuba, would like to hear from you. L. H. Harvey.

Louis Sequer, last heard from in Hericourt Hte, Saone, France. If any word notify Private Robert Owen, Company L—5th Infantry, Canal Zone.

The 97-Pound Weakling...

who became "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man"



Charles Atlas, twice winner and holder of the title "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

"I'll prove that YOU, too, can be a NEW MAN"—*Charles Atlas*

I DON'T care how old or young you are, or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. If you can simply raise your arm and flex it I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double-quick time! Only 15 minutes a day—right in your own home—is all the time I ask of you! And there's no cost if I fail.

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NOTE: No other Physical Instructor in the World has ever DARED make such an Offer!

My free book will be sent you merely for the asking. All you need do is mail the coupon below. No obligation. *Charles Atlas*

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My method—"Dynamic Tension"—will turn the trick for you. No *theory*—every exercise is *practical.* And, man, *so easy!* Spend only 15 minutes a day in your own home. From the very start you'll be using my method of *"Dynamic Tension"* almost unconsciously every minute of the day—walking, bending over, etc.—to BUILD MUSCLE and VITALITY.

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"Everlasting Health and Strength"

In it I talk to you in straight-from-the-shoulder language. Packed with inspirational pictures of myself and pupils—fellows who became NEW MEN in strength, my way. Let me show you what I helped THEM do. See what I can do for YOU! For a real thrill, send for this book *today.* AT ONCE. **CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 8312, 115 E. 23rd St., New York City.**

CHARLES ATLAS
Dept. 8312, 115 East 23rd St.,
New York, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscular development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength"—and full details of your 7-DAY TRIAL OFFER.

Name .....
(Please print or write plainly)

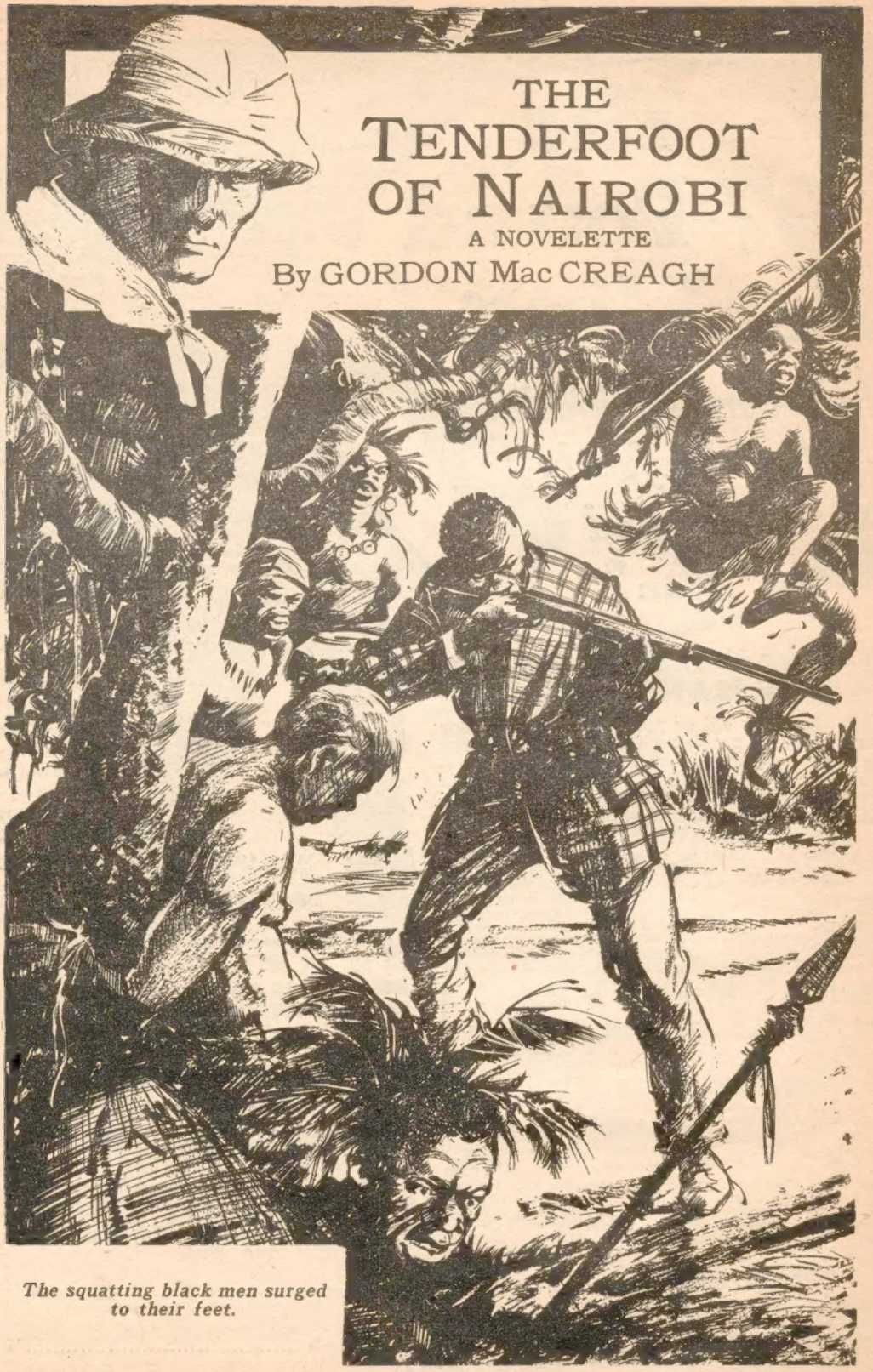
Address .....

City ..... State.....

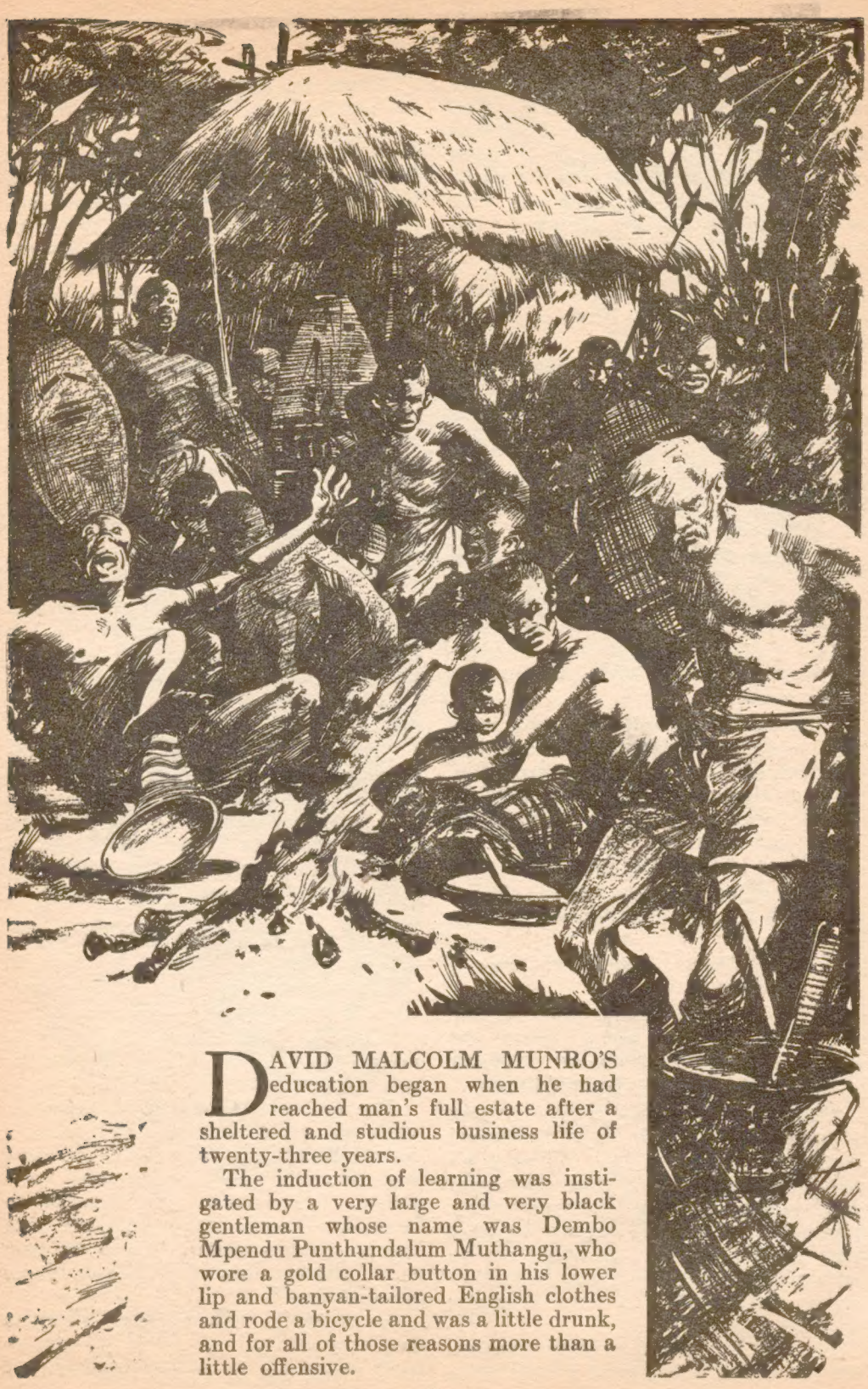
THE TENDERFOOT OF NAIROBI

A NOVELETTE

By GORDON Mac CREAGH



The squatting black men surged to their feet.



DAVID MALCOLM MUNRO'S education began when he had reached man's full estate after a sheltered and studious business life of twenty-three years.

The induction of learning was instigated by a very large and very black gentleman whose name was Dembo Mpendu Punthundalum Muthangu, who wore a gold collar button in his lower lip and banyan-tailored English clothes and rode a bicycle and was a little drunk, and for all of those reasons more than a little offensive.

David didn't know he was about to be educated. He thought he already was. For his pious uncle, Alastair Malcolm, having dutifully raised the orphan nephew and steered him into the paths of canny Scots business, had only very recently given him his blessing and a bill for the education and some very shrewd advice—free—that he now go forth to make his fortune some place where the competition might be a little less fierce than in the home land.

So David stood now in the smoky taproom of Williams Hotel in Nairobi, so gawkily homespun that the large black man, through all his wooziness, saw the newness of him and picked him to demonstrate his right under impartial British law to stand at a bar where white men gathered.

He stood there, it was true, but he stood alone except for one white man—or nearly white—a hulk bigger even than himself who hobnobbed with him with a certain defensive braggadocio to overlay the fact that he avoided other white men's eyes.

The other white men in the room were hard enough looking themselves, sun browned, alert, capable. They had withdrawn to scattered tables in very obvious distaste over what they considered an unwelcome intrusion, but they did no more than scowl at the formidable pair.

Along with his modern banyan clothes the black man had a modern mission English.

"I say, chum. Come and have a drink," he called.

David, although his education had not yet begun, had sense enough not to say what had flashed to his mind: "Thank ye kindly, but Ah'm no drinkin' the day."

He stood in indecision, a scant six feet of raw Scots lad, with his mist-chapped Highland complexion that still couldn't cover freckles the size of split yellow peas on high, bony cheecks. Between them a strong Calvinistic nose and a wide, tight mouth indicated that he could see no humor in the big black man's laugh—or, for that matter, in very little else of life.

The black man's near-white companion threw the influence of a bold voice to swing David's indecision.

"Come on, Jack; the chief is asking you have a drink." And to that he added, "You better."

David's eyes moved from the pair at the bar to the hard faces that stared at him from the scattered tables—cold, impersonal faces that offered no help, but it did seem to David that some of them moved in negation.

Davie's eyes jumped from one silent table to the next and his hands, hanging loose at his sides, twitched.

The hands were phenomena for any close observer's attention. The shapeless fit of his home-made clothes gave no indication of what his limbs might be, but those hands! Knobby protruberances of bone and freckles attached to massive red wrists, sandy hair, startlingly pale on the backs of thick fingers that twitched just enough to draw attention to them.

Davie spoke to the room at large. He spoke slowly; he had to translate the dialectic thought in his mind into good King's English.

"I would not be commencing my career with a misstep."

The implication was an immediate offense to the big black man. Tipsily belligerent, he brushed his companion aside with a wide sweeping arm and shoved his face close to Davie's. It surprised Davie at close range to find how much the man really topped his own near six feet.

The black man belched heady fumes into his face.

"I say, you fella. Be you too damnsite fine to take a drink?"

"Cut it, Chief Dembo," growled a voice from a table. "Can't you see the man's a new hand?"

The near-white companion raised his voice in quick defense. "The chief's jolly well got his right here. Or who says he ain't?" He came to tower over Davie. It seemed to be his function to intimidate people into compliance with the big black's whims. "Come on, new hand. Better take a drink with us. Never mind these—"

Davie spoke with measured slowness and very softly.

"I would not be commencing my career with a brawl."

WHETHER he meant compliance or refusal nobody knew. The black man's inflated dignity had been sufficiently flouted to stand for no further indecision. He swept his bully aside with wide commanding gesture; he took a fist-hold on Davie's coat lapel and dragged forward on it.

"Come on, you fella. You drink with me."

Davie's body responded to the strong pull no more than if it had been cast in cement. Only one of those hands. It came slowly up and closed over the black fist. Davie's eyes still roved about the room, cold gray with perplexity. He didn't at all know what he should do about this sort of thing. But those thick fingers closed over the hand that tugged so roughly at him, kept closing with the slow envelopment of a starfish.

The whole room was watching. Nobody offered encouragement or advice. Only one man went so far as to comment at all. He raised a dissipated face from his crossed arms and sobered enough to comment:

"My word! Lookit our li'l Dembo's eyes pop!"

The great yellow freckles of the closing hand slowly faded to leave the knobbly knuckles standing like skinned bone.

Chief Dembo's popping eyes screwed in pain and, "Ou-u-u-unh!" he let out a moan.

Davie let the fist go. Dembo snatched it away and tried to put all of it into his mouth. As agony rushed into it with the returning blood, rage rushed to his inflamed brain. Mumbling something in his native speech, he swung the other fist at Davie's face.

Even Davie knew what he should do about that sort of thing—and he knew that it must not be done slowly. His left hand flashed up to meet the fist, smack and snug in his palm like a baseball. He jerked it down and away and with its leverage twisted the big black around, twisted the arm excruciatingly up until one thick thumb held it high between the man's shoulder blades and the fingers reached up to hook well into the collar.

"Whee-ee!" the drunk yelped. "Pop 'im one, old chap!"

Davie very seriously said: "I would not be hitting an unsober man." But he put his right hand to gather a fistful of the gaudy banyan pants and he walked the man—walked him high stepping, on tiptoes, to the half door of the taproom.

Half doors in Africa do not conveniently swing on two-way hinges; they snap shut to a lock. Davie set his feet to the lift and heaved. Chief Dembo must have weighed all of two hundred; but Davie got his left under him and hove him clear of the floor, clear over the door's top in a beautiful arc that indicated the man must inevitably land on his head.

The woolly clunk and the verbal silence thereafter indicated that he did.

"Coo-oo!" the drunk said in an awed voice. "I'm quite sure, old chap, he'd rather you had hit him."

Chief Dembo's near-white henchman didn't know just what he should do about this thing. In his uncertainty he resorted to the menace of his sheer size. He lurched towards Davie, his arms hanging low, making growling noises in his throat. His own indecision came forth in an incoherent something about, "Can't get away with that—Chief Dembo—'mportant to gov'ment."

Davie crouched a little with open hands spread like a wrestler. He repeated his principle, but the careful King's English of it was submerged in his mental tenseness. "Ah wadna be commencin' ma career wi a onseemly brawl."

The hulking henchman's eyes wavered from Davie's down to his spread hands, those potent fingers half clawed to grapple. He didn't like those hands. His own hand slipped inside his shirt to his waistband.

"Watch it, Piet." More than one voice said it.

Well policed British East Africa does not, in theory, carry concealed weapons. But more than one hand slipped under a shirt. "You'll fight fair this time, Piet."

It was not experience; it was only Davie's reading that had told him the danger of hands concealed under shirts.

One of his own lunged out fast, tore out the whole of Piet's shirt front; its lift and hard snap down shook Piet's flat little black automatic to the floor.

"Better leave it, Piet."

Piet's eyes, low under his brows, swiveled from one hard voice to another. His left hand nursed the other wrist. He growled, saving face, "All right, you damned Rooinecks. Time will come there'll be more o' the likes of me." He tore the half door open and departed.

"Whoopee!" The drunk lurched from his seat and flung his arms about Davie. "My *dear* chappie!" He shook the thickness from his tongue. "That was positively stupendous. You'll take a drink with me now, I hope."

The other men crowded round, too soberly British to give way to demonstration. "Good work, Sir."—"Played indeed, Sir."—"Yes, come and have a drink with all of us."

THE drunk clung to Davie, more with an instinct of defending possession than to support himself. He leered at the others.

"I caught him first," he challenged them. "No, my dear fellow, not with all of them, but I insist that you honor me."

Davie pronounced another principle. "Thank you kindly. But—I don't drink."

The little group blinked incredulously.

"Hell," said one, "You're Scotch, aren't you."

"Scots." Davie corrected him.

"Fabulous!" The drunk still held him possessively. "Permit me to introduce myself. I'm Montague Forsythe. I came here twenty years ago to make my fortune and, er—well, here I am."

"David Malcolm Munro," David said gravely.

"And the Honourable Monty has got him!" a voice laughed.

The Honourable just grinned back at the man. "The blighter is jealous of my small remittance; he's only Jimmy Drebs. Permit me to introduce the other blighters." He was suddenly almost sober. "Mister Munro. This is Hawkins; and Simba Sam—specializes in lions; and Rhodes; and Neville; and Biashara Mason—trades the Masai Reserve; and Bentley, Rogers, Carlson—big game generally. I apologize for them, for the mousiness of them."

Davie was still very bewildered about it all.

"Yon black chieftain," he stammered. "Is he, belike—killt?"

Everybody reassured him. "Hell no. He only fell on his head." They were all very friendly now, all those who had offered neither advice nor encouragement while Dave faced the chief.

"I say, old chap—" The Honourable seemed to have an anxiety about his prize— "You're not serious, are you? I mean, about drinking?"

Davie nodded.

"My sacred aunt!" Monty shook his head. "This situation calls for a clear head. Let's sit down, what?"

"Oh oh!" said the man called Mason. "Out of the frying pan—"

The Honourable Monty cheerfully finished it for him. "The ruffian is trying to warn you, my dear fellow, that I am a man entirely without principles. But since you seem to have so many, we should make an excellent team. Have a chair, won't you, and I shall tell you the scandal about these chaps while they stay and listen to their shame."

The hard looking man laughed at him with a tolerance that indicated, at least, popularity. Davie studied the man. He saw a person shockingly gentlemanly. The long, aristocratic features, with what the British call a military moustache—it needed trimming just now—were the hallmark of fine breeding. Possibly, Davie thought, a little too fine, but it was shocking to note the familiar old cycle of tropics-frustration—liquor had sagged the eyelids, cut lines too deep for fineness, softened the tall frame.

Twenty years ago, the man said he had come. He might be, then, something under forty; he looked sixty; but a jovial, cynical sixty of much experience and no illusions.

THE HONOURABLE MONTY missed no flicker of the expression in Davie's face. He admitted all of it cheerfully. "Yes," he said, "I'm a mess, old man.

But you'll probably need me. You've made three quite formidable enemies."

"Three?"

"You can jolly well bet. Those two—and the colonial government."

Davie's horror burst from him in the native thickness of his tongue. "Whit wey hae I fleered th' government?"

"Yon blackamoor—" Monte's arched eyebrows expressed his distaste for all official maneuverings—"is a man of sudden importance, owing to the circumstance of there being a war." The eyebrows drew together in a quick frown of accusation. "By the way, why, may I ask, are you not in uniform? You're surely within the age of the first call?"

"My father," Davie said laconically, "was a Quaker. A missionary and a man of God."

The Hon Monte's jaw dropped; he shook his head again. "Well, I must say, old chap, for a man opposed to violence, you have a rather vigorous method of argument. "

"I'm afraid," said Davie, "I have not the missionary spirit."

"Ah!" said the Hon. Monte. "A refreshing admission. A meager enough seed, but it may, in these tropics of ours, grow. And that neat little trick of heaving a bounder over a door—where does that come from?"

"Hurrlin' th' cabar."

"Really! And, er—just what sort of Scottish rite is that?"

Extracting information about himself from Davie was like drawing his sound teeth piece by piece.

"Well, the cabar 's a pole, a telegraph pole like, and ye hurrl it."

"Oh! You hurrl—you mean, you throw it?"

"Aye. Ye take it by the butt and ye toss it so 't it'll land on its head end. Like throwing the hammer and such."

"Oh! Quite so, quite so. I see." The Hon. Monte appraised Davie's shapeless coat about his shoulders and his great raw hands. "A telegraph pole. And you call it a game. I take it one must be quite a lusty fellow, what? And so you, er—hurled yon blackamoor over the door onto his head end."

"I would be hoping he's not hurrt bad."

"I assure you," said the Hon. Monte with conviction, "you would be the only one so hoping. But let us not fritter time in this persiflage; let us return to the old muttons. Our blackamoor chief, I must explain, recruits labor among his people. The government, you see, is chary of drafting labor battalions on account of native unrest, which is pretty touchy now. So anybody who can bring in a thousand men at a time becomes quite an important lad, you see. Explains everything, doesn't it?"

It was all too new to Davie. He shook his head.

"But my dear fellow! Of course. It explains the mousiness of these other blighters."

THE blighters grinned sourly at this candid photography of themselves. The Hon. Monte went on to focus with merciless accuracy on everything within range of his cynical experience.

"Normally they're pretty exuberant bravos in their own right. But since, ah—everything is fair in war, anybody who isn't sickly polite to the administration's pet poodles is apt to find, let us say, difficulties about his licences and so on. And these more ruffiantly professions of our good colony, such as white hunters and traders, have never been pet poodles. Our Mister Dembo would not have tried his game at a place like the Avenue, where the élite congregate; only here with the riff-raff."

"I was thinking," said Davie, "belike of doing a wee of trade myself."

"You?" The Hon. Monte fell back to survey the phenomenon. "My dear fellow! You leave troubled conditions at home for native trade in Africa, where native unrest today is more of a trouble than the home office cares to admit. The black brother these days is an uppish lad. You're stepping into things, chappie. My word!" He leaned suddenly forward again, a little too eagerly, "Would this be your career that you spoke of?"

Davie nodded.

"My dear naive chappie! You will need leading by the lily white—" His flow of speech checked over an incon-

gruity too startling even for Monte. "I mean, you will need leading. You will need to be initiated into the sinful wiles of—"

The man called Mason laughed out loud.

"Scottish wool, ready to be shorn."

Davie stood up, very serious, his sandy brows a solid pale line across his forehead, his legs planted wide.

"Ye would not belike be laughing at my country?"

The man just stared at a touchiness that was beyond his ken. The Hon. Monte pulled at Davie to drag him down again.

"Sit down, old man. Take it easy. The fellow is just a bally colonial; he is incapable of understanding the home traditions."

Since pulling at Davie was like dragging at the columns of the billiard table, he changed his tactics. "Better come on over to my diggings. We can talk there without any of this coarse interruption. And I assure you, my dear fellow, there's not a man in this colony, even though I do say it myself, more competent to counsel a fugitive from official wrath."

"A fugitive!" It appalled Davie to know what sudden mishaps could befall an innocent newcomer to this strange land of Africa.

"But certainly, old man. You admit you want to trade, and that, in the eyes of our good administrators who have taken up the white man's burden, renders you under suspicion of nefarious dealing. Furthermore, when our favorite chief Dembo Important Muthangu brings his charge against you for assault and battery—aggravated assault it will be—for no reason other than that he hospitably asked you to have a drink with him, you will be a fugitive from jittery, and therefore outraged, justice. Ask any of these chappies."

The chappies nodded their well weighed opinion.

"He's right, sir. Trader interests always run counter to official, and the government these days is particular somethin' orful. You'd have to pay out your good money to a lawyer and they'd hold you for weeks while Dembo would find a witness to swear agin every one of us. You'd like enough win your case in the long run, but it'd drag on into the rainy season an' all, time a'wastin' and expenses mountin'. No, sir, traders and the Law don't mix well." They laughed. "Monte knows."

Monte beamed upon them. "Thank you, friends, for your good recommendation." And he grinned cynically upon them. "If I didn't shear him, there's more than one of you blighters would, and with a straighter face than mine."

Davie felt himself hemmed around by financial horrors, his hand forced. He let himself be led. At the door, a dour twisting of his lips showed strong teeth in what must have been a grin. He gave his estimate of himself to the room. "Heard ye ever, belike, o' the only Jew left in Aberdeen, that could never take a saxpence oot o' the Scots to get away?"

CHAPTER II

DEATH STRIKES BY NIGHT

THE HON. MONTY'S "diggings" were a record, in material objects, of Monte's history, as clear as the decline of a once proud civilization hewn in stone.

There was a plaque on the wall of Magdalen College, Oxford—which he throatily pronounced "Maudlin." There were two tennis rackets, warped by the climate, forlornly ragged of string. There were—the transition to Africa was easy to trace—zebra skins on the floor, a moth-eaten lion's head over the door. There were rifles of expensive manufacture—rusty. There was untidiness, there was dust, and on the table there were so many round patterns of glasses that had eaten through the varnish that they made almost a modern design.

Monty's decadence was beyond any shame for it. "Quite a mess, isn't it?" He dragged a chair for Davie and went instinctively to unlock the cabinet of hospitality. "Dashed native boys will steal your whiskey like it's gold." Then he turned to look blankly at Davie's hard frame and uncompromising face in the chair. He shrugged. "Well, I can

stand it off for a while, if you can for all your life." He continued to stand looking at Davie; the cynicism softened out of his face. Quite soberly he said:

"Almost would I advise you, young fella me lad, to pack up and get away home before Africa makes this kind of a mess out of you." It was only a flash. The shoulders gave a futile little shrug, the eyebrows arched and there was the Hon. Monty again, derisive of the worst that Africa could do.

"But nobody could ever have turned me back when I came. So let's get down to the business of your, er—fleecing, as my good friend Mason so crudely put it. Most unforgiving blighter, Mason; he still insists I wiped his eye over some ivory that he stole out of the Busoga without ever paying a shilling of export duty. Unappreciative—why, if the government laddies had caught him with it they'd have bally well put him in chokey.

Davie remained solidly obtuse to English wit. The Hon. Monty's jaw dropped and he came down to business.

"So you hope to make a career of African trade? The idea alone is sufficiently astounding. You have no training; no experience; no African language. Have you any money?"

"A little," Davie admitted cautiously.

"My dear old chappie! The days have long ago gone when a white man could go into the interior with a five-man safari of jim-cracks and come out with a fortune."

"But I have some trade goods that I brought out with me."

Even the Hon. Monty's cheerfulness was not proof against such unsophistication. "You brought out with you? Heavens alive, man! With all your inexperience you bought stuff to bring out! Who got at you? I suppose some blasted "African Outfitters" in London stuck you with a mess of penny mirrors and cootie combs."

Davie said woodenly: "No. They're things my father bought."

"Your father! Gods of Africa! A missionary, you said. What would he know of trade?" The exasperation of digging information out of a reluctant mine was nerve-shattering.

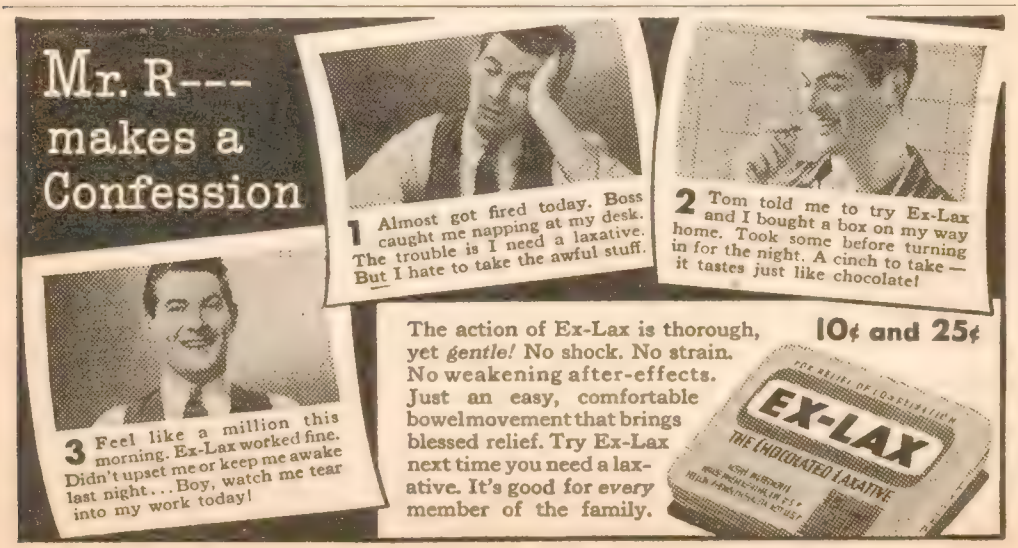
"Aye," said Davie. "He was a missionary, and of trade he knew not a thing. But of African psychology more than most men."

"African psychology?"

"Aye. His labors were in this country; and he bought some things for gifts to chiefs to win their good will, but—he never came back."

"Oh!" Monty's irritation succumbed to the conventions. "Sorry and all that, old man. Er—what sort of things? As a missionary, perhaps he knew something of what might be acceptable to the black boys."

"Uniforms," said Davie. "'Twas after the last war. He bought up a job of Austrian uniforms. They were verra cheap at the time."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1 Almost got fired today. Boss caught me napping at my desk. The trouble is I need a laxative. But I hate to take the awful stuff.
2 Tom told me to try Ex-Lax and I bought a box on my way home. Took some before turning in for the night. A cinch to take — it tastes just like chocolate!
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"Uniforms?" The Hon. Monty's impatience was visibly overlaid by speculation. "Uniforms can be dangerous business."

"Aye. Generals and field-marshals and bandsmen and such; all gaudy and bedevilled with eemitation gold braid."

Monty's eyes batted in rapid flickers like staring into a blinding light. "Austrian uniforms! Laddie, that begins to sound like sheer guidance from above."

"Aye. And there's some thairty poonds o' medals and such-like bedizenry."

"Austrian generals with medals!" Monty repeated it reverently. "Laddie, I salute your father. A right canny Scotch genius. A man inspired!"

"Scots." Davie corrected patiently.

"Whee-ee!" Monty let it go as he had in the tap room when he enthused over Davie's handling of the blackamoor. "This is quite sumptuous! This, old chappie—this calls for a drink!"

HE TOOK his drink, one worthy of a great occasion. Over its top he peered at Davie; his agile mind raced ahead with ideas.

"Uganda Protectorate," he said. "That's the place for you. The landscape positively crawls with chiefs and they've got some right meaty produce buried under the old family witch tree. By jove, those uniforms ought to dig some of it up."

A horror grew in his eyes at a sudden contemplation of catastrophe. "If, that is to say, the moths haven't got to them in all these years."

"There's no moths in Scotland," said Davie.

"So," said Monty, irrepressible in his humor and greatly daring, "I have heard. It is a matter, I understand, of sustenance."

Davie remained as unoffended as a steam shovel.

"I'm glad," he said, "you think there's business possibeelities with my stock."

"Possibilities? My dear fellow! This is something absolutely new! Field Marshals! Band leaders, *with* medals! Lord, man, they're a million better than opera hats ever were in the best of the good old bad days when one hat would fetch an ivory tusk. But—" Monty fired a quick warning finger. "You'll need leading by the—I mean, you'll have to be shown how to handle this. Because a trader gets dashed little sympathy from our colonial police. Even one not a fugitive."

"Aye," said Davie. "I understand yon black heathen will cheat a white man most seenful."

"You certainly have to know the ropes," said Monty cautiously.

"I'll not be able to pay ye anything," said Davie even more cautiously.

Monty threw caution to the winds. "Oh I say! Come now, old fellow! Don't let's mar so auspicious a venture with introduction of the filthy lucre." The cynical shamelessness of the man grinned from his dissipated face. "I shall doubtless make my bit o' commission here and there."

The muscular effort of smiling distorted Davie's face again.

"I'm not afeared," he said. "For you English are a people o' fine tradeetions."

The Hon. Monty was a little sobered by the reminder of noblesse oblige.

"And it's not in your tradeetion," Davie added, "that an Englishman can make anything on a Scot." His teeth showed in his smile, but there was a dourness in the strong bite of them that suggested a certain peril in any attempt to deviate from tradition.

The Hon. Monty was immensely relieved. "All right then, we need a clear head to tot up the *safari bandobast*. I have all the guns we'll need, so there's a jolly little saving. Against which we'll need a light truck—there's usable road all the way to the Karamoja. Camp boys efficient and fairly honest I know where to get. Better take a pencil, partner, and jot down a list. First, man traps."

"Man traps?"

The Hon. Monty chuckled over one of the officially forbidden tricks of the trade. "When a trader has goods as attractive as I hope yours are, he lets it be known that he scatters stout traps in the dark spots; so that any, er—predators are very prone to select the more moonlight approaches, where, of course,

anybody who happens to be sitting up with a charge of bird shot can see them."

Davie stared at a revelation of conditions that his missionary father had not seemed to know about at all.

Monty laughed at him.

"Experience," he told him, "is worth all else that a chappie has. You will in due time buy yours. The gods of Africa will test you in their fires, no fear."

FIRST camp on the road was a splendor in the evening sun. Or rather, off the road. For Monty shrewdly guided the truck to the concealment of a far copse of giant fig trees that lined a stream.

"The first principle of trade," he instructed Davie, "is that the less our good paternal government knows about anything, the better for everybody. And a more immediate prospect is that that by around this time there will be a johnny or two looking for you with a warrant for attempted murder at the very least. Trading, you will find, has it exciting moments."

"It will be but a passing trouble," said Davie stoutly. "The Friends have aye recommended trading as a peaceful profession."

"Anything," said Monty wisely, "can be peaceful—for a rabbitty chappie who turns the other cheek. Which, since you have quite grievously not done, our ways must be those of the felon." He smiled cheerily at Davie over the prospect.

In fine seclusion, accordingly, the long stored bales of goods were stripped of cordage and careful tar paper and the resplendent uniforms hung out on the surrounding scenery to air.

And what a scenery! Pearl gray and silver, azure and gold; tassels, frogues, points-pendants; braid in flashing festoons. All the sartorial craft of a military regime designed to lure men to sacrifice their lives for glory.

Monty gave one appraising glance and wasted no invitation on Davie. "This is an occasion, my dear fellow, not to be denied." And purposefully he drank a toast.

"To your career, laddie—and mine."

He grew cautious over the thought.

"I would be hoping he's not hurrt bad."

"Better send the boys scouting to make sure we're alone. The next principle of trade is, everybody is agin the trader." Methodically he took a gun—and loaded it.

"We'll be leavin' 'em hang to let the night damp smooth some of the creases out," he explained. "And we'll be jolly well seein' that they remain there."

The black camp boys, four of them, turned their boggling eyes into their heads in ecstasy. Monkeys in the high branches paused from their supper of wild figs to show little black faces through the leaves and chatter thoughts not so far removed from those of the black boys.

Davie's pale brows met in anxiety.

"Yon heathen boys," he worried. "Will they not be thieving?"

Monty shook his head with grim promise. "Not from an old hand like me who knows enough never to bother the law to recover."

"Belike 'twould be good," Davie hazarded, "to promise each one a suit as a reward for faithful service."

Monty stopped him right there. "That's tourist practise; not trader. Man, these things are sheer art. They're a year's pay."

So Davie thankfully gave each one of them a stick of tobacco worth all of four pence.

They loved him. They would love and admire anybody who owned the world's choicest wealth. They gave him a name. *Bwana waa-Vasi,* "the Lord of Many Dresses."

Monty drank another toast.

"And mind you," he said, "we'll trade this for nothing other than ivory and quill gold. No bulky gums and fibers and all that sort of rot. But at that we'll have to establish a depot; all sorts of nosey officials nowadays are tryin' to squeeze the last penny out of a chap's business. And I know the very man; crafty johnny who has a post right on the Uganda-Kenya border; never paid a tax on anything in his life."

His drink to the exhilarating thought of a shrewd colleague of his own choosing left him in a hazy state of bliss and left Davie alone to his own worries.

TROPIC night fell on the camp with an audible sound as unmistakable as a vesper bell — the quick transition from the noises of the open daylight to the furtive dark. The monkeys' querulous scufflings for comfortable position stilled, the birds peeped their last sleepy notes; and there it was. Like another radio program, the African night tuned in, whispering and whining to itself.

The camp boys were Kikuyus, a people who lost all their warrior instincts two generations ago when the British drove the Masai from their borders into the Mau. All that was left to them was their ineradicable African assurance that devils whispered in the open night and crept into people's bodies through their snoring mouths. So they wrapped their heads in their blankets and crawled under the low eaves of the double tent canopy.

They left Davie horribly alone and ignorant. Davie sat on his cot within the tent and stared out through the open flap into the moonless dark. He could see nothing of his festooned stock in trade—not physically. Mentally he could see it ravished piecemeal by every noise of the night.

A spotted hyaena whroo-whroo'd its hoarse shriek. Davie didn't know what it was. He wondered whether it ate uniforms. A leopard in quest of frogs whined sulkily in the stream bed. Davie wondered whether it was lions, whether lions stood up on their hind legs and sharpened their claws on uniforms. A great *bundi* owl screamed like a man in torture. Davie wondered whether it was a marauder who had perhaps stepped on a thorn. The Kikuyu boys didn't wonder; they knew it was a *kitamiri* devil and they groaned and smothered their heads the tighter.

Davie leaned across and shook Monty. Monty groaned and remained limp. Davie brooded the thought of taking that loaded gun and standing guard. In all his sheltered life he had never fired off a gun. His thoughts went to those protective traps. He had never set a trap; he wondered whether he could.

He hunched on his cot edge, loath to sleep. He stared out into the richly festoomed dark; he stared back at Monty's stifled breathing; he supported his head on hand and knee, and his thoughts were as gloomy as his body was weary. Till, inevitably, he dozed.

Accordingly, when the stealthy footsteps came in the still small hour before the dawn, he didn't hear them. He heard nothing till the faint sound of fine cloth raiment ripping on a thorn bush. An excruciating sound! A sound to rip a thrifty man's heart!

On the instant he was awake and running. Guns, traps, weapons of no sort were in his mind. He ran blindly, his hands outstretched into the dark. Only let him get his hands on whatever it was that ripped his stock in trade upon thorns!

His one hand collided with a something—a something that smelled of goat but was hairless. His other hand hit it. The crunch of his fist was the only sound and the thing dropped away from be-

fore him. He rushed on, infuriated.

The night was still pitchy but the beginnings of a faint eastern glow differentiated shadows from deeper shadows. Davie charged at the thickest shadows with all the rage and recklessness of a lion charging in defense of its meat. He was fortunate; they were not thorn bushes moving in the wind. He collided with bulky shapes, too many to hit all at once. But something that he hit screamed.

Then African Babel filled the night. Men shouted, yelled, groaned. Davie ravened amongst them. He hit, wrenched, kicked, did everything but bite. The monkeys above woke up and howled. The Kikuyu camp boys snorted from their head wrappings like buffalo bursting from their wallows and howled.

Davie let his voice go and howled—an ancient rallying call of the Munro clan, an inherited memory of battle. "*Creag na Theine!*" he shouted and battered at whatever his hands touched.

He felt a limb between his hands. It might have been a leg. His fingers closed over it and twisted like wringing laundry. The man howled agony.

The Kikuyu boys rallied to the call with all the power of their African lungs, but came no nearer to help than did the monkeys.

Davie barged into a huge bulk that stood its ground and punched back at him; a blow hit the side of his head like a club. He grappled it and drove fearful blows at whatever part of it he could hit. The bulk shuddered to each thudding impact; it struggled mightily to push away from its mistake of thinking to trade punches with that blind fury in the dark.

Something seared Davie's shoulder, ripped through his shirt and burned cold over his shoulder blade. With all his inexperience he knew it must be a knife. Instinct, rather than practise, made him twist the bulk between it and his own body. It must have struck again, for the bulk screamed high like a wounded horse.

Other forms swarmed over Davie. He fell, but took two with him. One in each great arm, he lay on his back and held them over himself. They stank of rancid butter and squirmed. Feet, naked but as hard as hoofs, milled and trampled around and over them. Blows thudded blind upon bodies above them; voices yelped. Some shrieking maniac was busy with steel. Bodies tripped, sprawled over men who were already down.

Davie lay, half smothered and sick, but thankful for the armour of the merciful dark and his own two human shields that he clutched to himself. He turned the power into his muscles and squeezed them to him, and their furious heaving to free themselves slackened down to moans.

THEN at last a gun roared out from the tent, as indiscriminate as the maniac with the knife. The appalling racket of small shot amongst twigs and the unmistakable leathery impact on tough hides brought a momentary gasping silence, an inhalation of horror; until choked lungs let go a Babel that outhowled even the monkeys.

The demoralization of spraying small shot on naked bodies transcends the single deadliness of a rifle bullet. Hard feet hit the ground in full stampede; shadows raked into thorn bushes, screamed, caromed away. The second barrel roared out. Receding shrieks told that it was not entirely wasted.

Davie lay, grateful to his God for his twin shields above him and for the fact that he lay closest to the ground of all that furious mêlée.

Not till then did a camp lantern flicker to life and the Kikuyu boys came bounding, brandishing snatched sticks, shouting what dire vengeance they were prepared to deal out to marauding thieves.

They dragged Davie's protective shields from him. The men flapped feebly and gasped like fish. Davie got up and shook himself; he was suddenly aware then that the pitchy blackness had turned to a visible gray and there was the Hon. Monty, looking like a dissolute ghost a hundred years old and shivering with a palsied hangover that needed support by his shotgun barrel, but mentally as unruffled and sardonic as at his soberest moment.

"My sacred word!" said Monty. "The old missionary instinct. You certainly have folded the errant black brethren to the manly bosom!" He looked hopefully to Davie.

Davie roared blasphemy at him. "The de'il wi' missionaries! And anacondas forbye! Get the men oot to see what the black heathen ha thieved."

Monty grunted Swahili gutturals at the boys. Then, with quick concern: "I say, old man! You're bleeding!"

"The de'il wi bluid! There's more important things to fore. Come on and count our losses."

Neither Davie nor Monty were able, without invoices, to recall the count of a couple of hundred garments. But the black boys, unspoiled by literacy, could remember every astounding detail; each garment, where it had hung, and lovingly they could describe its ornament.

The check-up was a pleasing tribute to the sudden rage of Davie's onslaught. Two were gone and one—the one that had warningly ripped—was lamentably reduced in value.

"Dashed lucky, I'd call it."

Davie was not mollified. "Do ye call it lucky to lose one per cent o' your business the first day?"

The near-strangled captives lay now tied with ends of tent rope. Davie glowered down upon them. Brawny men of normally fierce appearance, they were sufficiently revived to roll their eyes in sullen terror of what their captor might do to them now that he could see them.

"Ah yes," said Monty. "Their disposition may be discussed while I sew up that cut of yours."

Davie peeled off his shirt, winced as it came away from where it had stuck. The trussed men's eyes became protuberant black marbles in saucers of white. Monty grinned from Davie's bared torso to them.

"Laddie," he breathed, "I had rather suspected you of quite immoderate brawn. But this—this, my dear chappie, is quite an asset. The thews of you will be noised abroad by these two johnnies and there will be turbulent men in the land who will hesitate before rushing blindly to the fray."

"What should we do with them?" Dave frowned. It was a real problem.

"Quite a question, laddie. There are in this country men of our ruffianly profession who would shoot them— Hold still now while I sew you up. My hand is a little bit shaky this morning."

Davie controlled his consternation. "Man dear! I would not be doing any so—"

"So I imagined. And to tell you the truth, I have some inhibitions left myself. Dashed nuisance, a gentlemanly upbringin'; hampers a fellow. So there is the good African alternative of lettin' 'em eat *kiboko*."

"What's that?— Ouch!"

"Don't squirm now! For a man in my condition I'm doin' a rather neat job of deformed herringbone patten here— *Kiboko* is a right corrective strip of rhino hide. Whale the tar out of 'em and turn 'em loose."

"I would not be ill treating the mees-guided heathen."

DAVIE frowned down at the men and heaved a huge sigh. What he would do seemed little enough for the loss of one per cent of his business, yet what more could he do?

He hoisted one of the men up, pointed to the knots that bound his wrists. The Kikuyu camp boys rushed to undo them. The man was not of their tribe, so they gleefully looked for a vengeance worthy of the *Bwana's* might. They chattered callous anticipation to each other.

"They're wondering," Monty translated, "whether you're going to give one mighty wrench and pull the fellow's arms off like a beetle."

"No," said Davie, serious in his intent. "I'll just kick him in the—I'll juist gie him a fine kick and let him go."

He bunched the man up, hoisted him off his feet, gathered up his knees, and then he dropped him and let him have it. Literally drop-kicked him. Well and truly in the fair center of his African understanding.

The man rolled like a shot rabbit. Over and over, and when he could find his feet he set them to the ground and bolted into the underbrush like a rabbit peppered and due shortly to die.

"Trade — of the right kind—could be good for all three of us."

Davie solemnly took up the other man and bettered his own record. He grimaced over his hands, pulled grass and wiped them.

"They're greazy as auld Nick's porringer," he said.

The Hon. Monty was softly clapping his hands with measured appraisal. "So you would not ill treat the misguided heathen? Very neat indeed. I rather fancy, though, they would have preferred *kiboko*. And where, my doughty lad of non-combatant convictions, did you acquire that formidable little mannerism?"

"Fute ba," said Davie laconically.

"Indeed? These little revelations of your grim past come so refreshingly.

And what Scotch—I mean Scots—ceremony is that?"

"'Tis no ceremony. 'Tis a game."

"Ah! Another little Highland game?"

"Aye. I used to play fullback."

"Oh!" Enlightenment broke upon Monte. "You mean rugger!"

"Aye, fute ba."

One of the Kavirondo boys came with round eyes and jabbered. Monte's eyes widened too.

"Oho! A footprint in the sand? We must jolly well look into this."

In all the trampled confusion of naked feet and rolling bodies and flecks of blood there the footprint was. Planted solid and unmistakable, as startling as Robinson Crusoe's find. Only, unlike that momentous discovery, this was a great heel and sole of a shod foot! A vast one, solitary and immense. All others had been trampled out in the mêlée. This one, though, was not as entirely unexpected as Crusoe's.

Monty fingered his raggy moustache, frowning. "I was rather thinking that brother African would hardly try this sort of a rannygazoo on an old hand like me all off his own little cricket bat."

Davie's eyebrows made their pale straight line. "Aye so. I was being sure that one who punched right heftily back at me had clothes on."

"Can you guess whose great pug it is?"

Davie shook his head. "But I was being almost sure I fair broke a rib to him one time."

"Laddie," the Hon. Monty said reverently, "these are times when you make me wish—almost—that my noble deeds might equal yours. This one, I assure you, will not be forgotten—by the recipient. It's Piet's."

"Ye mean yon grand gomeril that was assistant to the blackamoor king?"

"Aye." Monty grinned. "There are nuances in your northern speech, old chap, that fit some situations to perfection. The gomeril was Piet van Steen. Nobody else in all of British East Africa has a foot of that size."

"Why would Piet be wanting to thieve a couple unforms?"

"I'm wondering." Monty smoothed the other half of his moustache. "Not that Piet would be averse to a banditry, but I would give him credit for a larger scale. Blasted half breed Boer; one of Hertzog's gang down in S. A. Bally rotters both."

"What might that be signifying?"

"I haven't the noggiest, old man. The pieces don't fit. Only—Hertzog, you know, led the Boer party that opposed the Union of South Africa's participation in this war. Dashed near put it over too. Proposed the return of German West to the Heinies and all that. Oh, an absolute outsider, Hertzog."

"AYE, I've read about yon renegade." But Davie, hard-headedly practical, could not follow the flights of Monty's imagination. "Where's any connection?"

"Well, my good friend Mason, who, you may have noticed, has a mind that looks for the worst in a fellow, has suggested that a thousand black laborers could just as easily be diverted to a thousand black soldiers."

"Losh! That sounds a far-fetched ambeetion for a blackamoor's assistant such as Piet. Moreover, how would anybody know what we carried in these bales, to come thieving for them by night? We never opened them up till here in safe hiding."

"Easy enough to know if—" Monty's face was a twisted agony in his struggle through the haze that still hung over his mind. "If important enough. Our Piet is a scarab of devious doin's, and any half educated native clerk, any breed in the customs office, would have seen your invoices."

"Aye so. But why would my invoice o' goods be important to a body?"

"Dashed if I exactly know." Monty shook his head gloomily. "Damn it, I wish I hadn't gone so far under last night. What I'm getting at is anything can be important to—well, to spies. The queerest information leaks, and friend Piet, if he could make anything for himself out of any useful bit o' news—round about, through some of his off-color friends—you understand?"

"I would understand that you are a wee bit jumpy about spies."

"Old man, don't delude yourself. Afri-

can colonies just smell with 'em. Too damned many of the dusky brothers these days can hear those bloody foreign broadcasts that promise 'em freedom and all that sort of rot. Come over in English and Arabic and all, even Swahili. No, the situation is jumpy, not I."

"Ye have not seen yourself in the mirror this morn," said Davie dryly.

CHAPTER III

BULLETS FOR GOLD

THEY turned towards the tent, and there one of the baffling phenomena of Africa faced them.

At the edge of the brush there sat the two men whom Davie had so competently kicked in their posteriors and let go. They squatted on their heels, peeled wands before them on the ground.

"Signifies they want palaver," Monty explained. "Might get some info out of 'em. All right," to the camp boys, "bring 'em in."

The men came, truculent scamps, quite unabashed by their recent castigation. They squatted again so that their acknowledged superiors might look down on them. They orated at length.

"Well I'll be damned!" Monty said. "They say they want to take service with you."

"With me?"

"Yes. They took service with the big half-white man, because he promised them loot and they thought he was a great enough leader to protect them in all and any nefarious doin's. But the idol, they now say, has feet like the droppings of cows. So the great *Bwana* who can crush men like ripe bananas and has feet like stone mauls is the logical man to work for."

"The de'il an' all!" Davie looked his amazement. "Might be a good idea, don't you know. They're Turkanas; turbulent ruffians from up near where we're going. Neighbors of Dembo's; untutored savages at their best; and, like all good neighbors in Africa, they can remember a grudge or two if it suits their current job. So we might find 'em useful. Anyway, they'd put some pep into these Kikuyus."

"Well, if you think so. What are their names?"

"*Majina yako nani?*" Monty asked.

"Goga wa-Tani," said the one, and, "Magongo wa-Moshi," the other.

"Gog and Magog," said Monty. "And they bally well look it."

Davie's stolid sense of humor liked the rogues. "All right. We will belike be needing a braw lad or two that might come to aid better than these feared-o'-dark Kikuyus."

Gog and Magog laid their peeled wands over Davie's boot toes and bent their heads to them, and the first sign of ascendancy they showed over the Kikuyus was to change his name. Not *Bwana wa Vasi,* the Lord of Dresses, they said. But *Bwana Chatu na Seta Nyati,* Python who Crushes Buffalos.

"I've an idea," Monty said, "that you've hired yourself a pair of men."

Davie suffered a thrifty qualm at the informal suddenness of the thing. Aye, but—but we've not spoken a word o' the amount o' their pay."

"Oh," Monty dismissed the matter airily. "The system is quite simple. We feed 'em and give 'em a blanket or something every now and then, and they'll count on making their little pickin's out of the nefarious deals of an unprincipled trader person."

Davie's eyes opened, shocked. "But a man plying an honest business—"

Monty laughed at him. "You're tarred, laddie, with the trader brush. Far be it from me to say there are no honest traders, but the simple savage's experienced opinion is pretty much like our kind colonial administration's."

Davie's lips, knife thin, sucked on the situation.

"It's no other than the good business principle of commissions," Monty reminded him, and with hard sardonic meaning, "Everything that happen in Africa pays its, er—commissions."

Davie's frown as he absorbed that was bleakly thoughtful, until his bleaker grin changed the set of the lines.

"Never Scot paid too much a commission yet," he stated his confident creed. "Let's be on our fair way."

BY DEVIOUS ways the truck proceeded. Not by the good highway that government enterprise had built to connect the far interiors of the colony with commerce, but lurching drunkenly over the untamed plain, dodging like a furtive animal around scrubby thickets.

"If I know my by-ways of Africa," Monty said, "we'll not be surprised by any fat slave of the Law with a warrant. But brother Piet knows 'em as well as I do, so we'll lay the nightly mine field."

"If ye'll remain sober enough," Davie said with uncompromising bluntness.

"Laddie, I can save it till a binge is well earned; otherwise I would not have survived my twenty delinquent years in Africa."

And he surprised Davie most agreeably by doing just that. With all the skill of a wolf trapper he set the strategic snares around the nightly camps. Monstrous things with teeth designed to hold leopards, half buried in the ground, cunningly covered with twigs and innocently fallen leaves. "The bloomin' British Navy couldn't do it better."

Davie watched with close concentration.

"Learning how?" Monty grinned up at him.

Davie nodded.

"Aha!" Monty jeered. "The old conscience is already slipping, what?"

"A man must learn to protect his investment," Davie grumbled.

Well, I'll give you this," Monty said, "as a sop to the good Christian inhibitions. You're wonderin' why I send a Kikuyu boy to half cut a small tree top and let it hang. Well, laddie, that's a hobo sign on the fence to tell all who travel along the thin edge of the Law, "Beware of the dog." It's worth many hours of good sleep, and by daylight brother Piet will need quite a gang to come marauding."

By devious and cunning ways, then, Davie's business arrived unscathed to the "depot" of Monty's acquaintance who was sly enough never to have paid any taxes, and who, at Monty's suggestion, was to act as an undercover agent to conceal all accountings from government snoopers.

An outlying oasis of habitation it was, glittering tin-roofed amongst trees; a trading post. From out the hot plain it looked cool and inviting. Situated as squarely on the border line between the Colony of British East Africa and the Uganda Protectorate as was ever any gambling joint on a state line, it was an ideal spot.

The proprietor, without taking offense, accepted the appellation of Bubu Charlie. Bwana Bubu, his natives called him, The Dumb One, because his weak blue eyes stared timidly out of a round face at people and the approach of government officials affected him with an affliction of speech that made questioning very difficult.

But friends didn't frighten him; he could talk to friends with a fluently profane insight of local undercover gossip.

Monty introduced Davie, coldly formal. "Mr. Munro, allow me the pleasure of presenting Mr. Charles." That hallowed British formality accomplished, he became humanly conversational. "A new chum. I'm showin' him the ropes of trade."

Bubu Charlie's eyes opened perceptibly. He said, "Ho indeed?" and almost imperceptibly he smiled. "Trade—of the right kind," he said, "could be good for all three of us."

Monty laughed at him. "No, not guns, Bubu. Too bally dangerous, these days, even for me. But we have something that seems to carry its own hazards, so give us the local lowdown."

He told him their story from the beginning. Bubu whooped.

"Slung that big buck onto 'is 'ead, did 'e? Nice little job o' weght liftin', but not any too bloomin' smart. It's brains counts in trade, not brawn."

HE HAD a curious mannerism of directing all his conversation at Monty, as though Davie, a person of another breed altogether, were not present. "Ain't got more brawn than brains, 'as 'e?"

Monty shrugged only his whimsical eyebrows.

Of Piet, Bubu Charlie said forcefully: "That bloody son came around 'ere

tryin' to run some o' my boys orf with 'is baboon mouth full o' fat promises."

Monty was surprised. "Our Piet is gettin' quite bold."

"Ain't 'e though? Mighty uppity these days. I told 'im if 'e come agyne, so 'elp me, I'd shoot 'im a 'ole in 'is blarsted belly first 'n then arsk 'im what 'e come for."

Davie received an impression that Bubu of the pale eyes was not a man who bluffed.

"What's Piet's game, d'you think?" Monty asked. "What's his hook-up with this Dembo rotter?"

"'Anged if I rightly know." Bubu's round eyes pinched down. "But you can bet your bloomin' 'ead it's somethin' particular narsty."

Monty's careless smile twisted again to the strain of groping for a mystery in the dark. "Yes, I'm— I don't mind saying I'm afraid so. If there's enough in it to bolster Piet's courage that far—"

"Yessir. If it's good enough to boost 'is guts to try a game on a man o' your standin' in this country, you bet your lost soul you'll be seein' that spotty belly agyne, and with more'n a few man be'ind 'im this time."

Which led naturally up to the disposal of the stock in trade.

"Better leave 'arf ov it 'ere." The blue eyes were widely innocent. "Just in case Piet might do you dirty."

Monty's eyes were expressionless on Bubu's. Bubu didn't need expression; he knew the ingrained gospel of all old timers in every land—that experience must be bought by the newcomer just as they in their time bought theirs, and with all the rest of the brotherhood he could point to Gospel for justification—"The lamb is ordained to be shorn."

"Yes," he repeated. "A full 'arf, I'd advise 'im, wouldn't you?"

Monty said slowly: "Yes, I think that would be about right." He looked to Davie.

Davie looked from one man to the other. Business in Africa seemed to him to be fiercer than any that his good uncle had warned him against in the home land. He exhaled his tuneless

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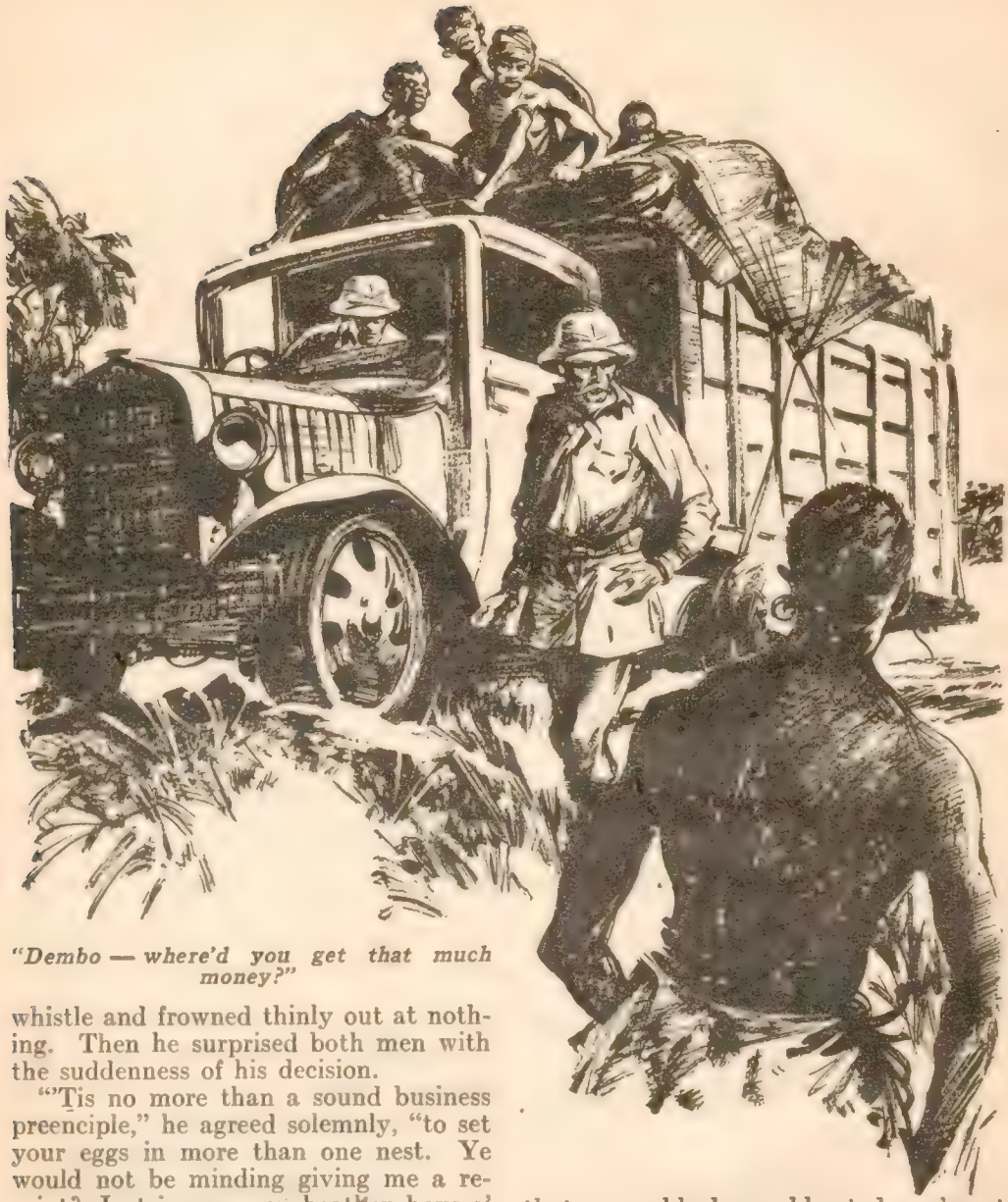


"Dembo — where'd you get that much money?"

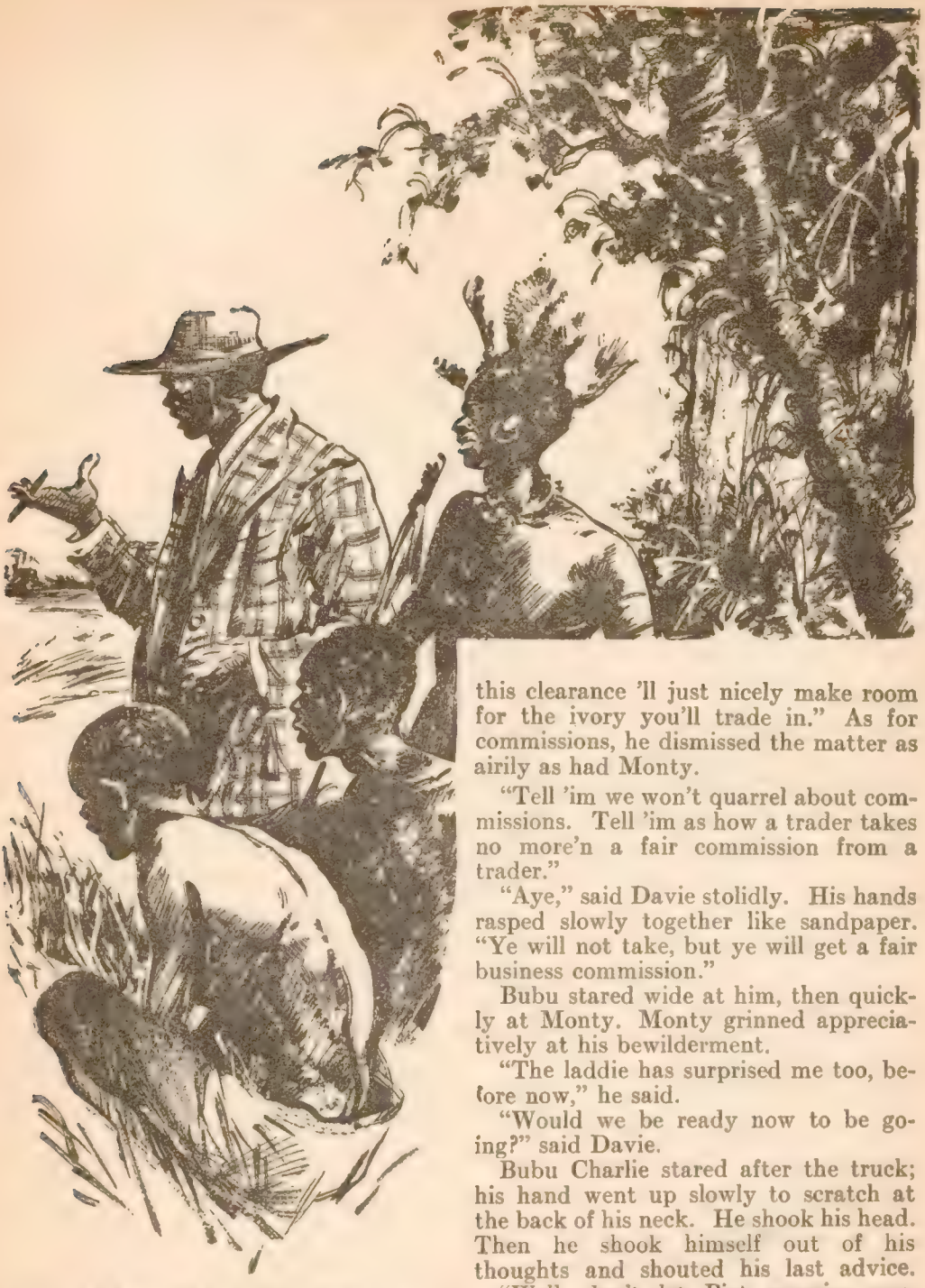
whistle and frowned thinly out at nothing. Then he surprised both men with the suddenness of his decision.

"'Tis no more than a sound business preenciple," he agreed solemnly, "to set your eggs in more than one nest. Ye would not be minding giving me a receipt? Just in case yon heathen boys o' yours might be thieving. I see ye have a round dozen o' malefactor-lookin' retainers."

"Thievin'? From me?" The very thought opened the Bubu eyes to the incredulous stare of a fish; he gulped like one too. "Tell 'im 'oo these boys are, Monty. Ain't you taught 'im yet the likes o' us don't take no educated black? And 'aven't told 'im I got 'iding places that never black nor blarsted gov'ment agents will ever find? Sure I'll give 'im a receipt all fair an' above board."

Davie accordingly left the cronies to their talk through a busy hour while he drew up a meticulously itemized list of every garment that he would leave, its size and shape and color, every ornament on it, well nigh every button.

"As a matter o' good business preenciple," he said, "would ye check that over



now? And would ye tell me what, er—commission ye would be expecting?"

Bubu Charlie's eyes were pale blue agates on Monty.

"You'll see as I'm done right by," he said. Then he let himself smile. "And this clearance 'll just nicely make room for the ivory you'll trade in." As for commissions, he dismissed the matter as airily as had Monty.

"Tell 'im we won't quarrel about commissions. Tell 'im as how a trader takes no more'n a fair commission from a trader."

"Aye," said Davie stolidly. His hands rasped slowly together like sandpaper. "Ye will not take, but ye will get a fair business commission."

Bubu stared wide at him, then quickly at Monty. Monty grinned appreciatively at his bewilderment.

"The laddie has surprised me too, before now," he said.

"Would we be ready now to be going?" said Davie.

Bubu Charlie stared after the truck; his hand went up slowly to scratch at the back of his neck. He shook his head. Then he shook himself out of his thoughts and shouted his last advice.

"Well, don't let Piet surprise you. 'Cause if I knows any bloomin' thing about this 'ere border you'll be seein' 'im."

The truck lurched drunkenly on. Monty, at the wheel, was as narrow-

eyed in speculation as was Davie beside him. The native boys, safe in the assurance of food, had nothing else to worry them. They clung to the truck's every holding point and grinned as happily as apes.

BUT BUBU CHARLIE, for all of his close knowledge of doings along the border, was wrong about meeting Piet.

The truck was laboring in rock-strewn country, picking its way in first speed in and out amongst bowlders, around steep buttes of slanting shale. Bad country for an ambush.

But the figure that moved out from behind a butte was not Piet, and Bubu was wrong again about the number of men. Only half a dozen men accompanied this figure, and not a spear in sight amongst them. It was too far yet to distinguish faces or motives. But Monty reached back for a rifle and very expertly snapped the bolt out and in with one hand while he steered with the other.

"A white man with a following of six is just one man short of us," he weighed the odds. "So we proceed. All the same, old man, something to remember is that a good trader is a good shot. You really must put in some rifle practise."

A little farther on he ejaculated, "By gad! It's not a white man! It must be—Why, of course! A big monkey of that size in white man clothes couldn't be any other than Chief Dembo!"

"Aye so." Davie stiffened. "Not Piet but his friend Dembo. What might that be signifying?"

"Damned if I know. Maybe nothing. It's Dembo's country on the Uganda side, and he could get here before us easy enough. Only why? There's the devil in this somewhere."

"What way would he know?"

"Easy enough. Bush telegraph. You'll learn, if you remain a trader, that news travels. We'll palaver the bounder; let him open his big mouth and stick the old cloven hoof into it."

Chief Dembo did open his big mouth—in a grin that embraced even Davie, though it twisted down to a thick scowl when his little red eyes fell on the two Turkanas, ex-henchmen of Piet's. He jabbered ferocious dialect at them.

They, secure in the protection of the white lord whom they had adopted, grinned at him and jabbered things back that brought covert grins to the faces of Dembo's men behind him.

"Wish they'd hold their little afternoon conversations in Swahili," Monty said. "Our lads must be passing some right juicy repartee about the chief's family tree to pop his ugly eyes that much."

Dembo changed the subject. He turned to the white men, but he was sulky now. He came to the point, not beating all around the bush as an African, but as directly as a man dressed in white clothes might, and in English, as opposed to an untutored savage who would address a white man in uncouth Swahili.

"Some fella tell me you got some clothes for trade."

"What fella?" Monty asked uncompromisingly.

Dembo was vague, as befitted trade. "One friend I got."

"What kind of clothes you want to trade?"

"Some fella tell me you got damfine uniform."

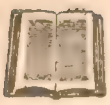
The two white men still sat in the truck cab. Davie's hand closed over Monty's right knee. "Oo-oof!" Monty moaned, and in a fierce whisper, "Yes, I know the fella as well as you."

Dembo didn't like either whispered conferences or his inferior position. He said: "You come down, I mebbe talk trade."

Monty nudged Davie and together they climbed down. Monty left the rifle in the cab. To Dembo he said: "Talk it nice and no tricks. You know how the Bwana Chatu argues."

Chief Dembo had all an African's lack of lasting indignation over personal chastisement, just as many white men have over wordy abuse; both, born of the heat of the moment, could be as easily forgotten. Dembo could grin over it.

"He one damn tricky fella. My head pain one whole day. You fella show what you got for trade."



HERE was business. Under its spell Davie could forget an altercation too. He chose a uniform from his stock, a splendid thing of blue and gold. He had never seen it done, but his gesture was pure East Side New York as he draped the rich cloth over his arm and turned it to let the sun flash on its heavy epaulettes and braid.

Chief Dembo's eyes glistened. "What kind that?"

"This one," Davie told him, "is a general."

"How I know that for true?"

Davie was not offended.

"Can ye read?" he asked. "The military tailors' pattern books came with the job lot."

Yes, Dembo was a modern African; he had been through the I.O.C. mission school. He turned the resplendent pattern pages with close attention. He seemed to be satisfied.

"What you want for trade?"

Here Monty came in. Not the Honourable with his aristocratic ramblings and sardonic speech—a Monty keen and hard in bargaining.

"We'll take ivory," he said. "No dead stuff picked up in the jungle. Only scrivellos. We'll trade two pounds for one by weight. This suit complete with all its hangings and trimmings will weigh about twelve pounds. So—"

Davie stopped him. "Aye, but ye've not mentioned the worth o' yon scrivello, whatever it is."

"Good hard scrivello ivory." Monty told him quickly, "should be worth—if the European market will ever recover—about one pound sterling per pound."

Chief Dembo was used to trade arguments even if he didn't understand them. He grinned and made his counter offer. "I got no ivory. I got money."

"Well, how much?"

Dembo, had he been dealing in the familiar business of barter, would have haggled the exchange down through half a day of wordy bargaining, but talking money meant a conception of values that was beyond his wit. He blurted out his offer.

"Five pounds English."

It was obvious even to Davie's inexperience that he was quoting a prearranged figure and one set high enough to assure acceptance.

Bluntly he put it to the chief.

"What way did Piet not come to make the offer himself?"

Its directness caught Dembo off guard. Ingenuously he let it go. "Piet, he sick. He got two bone broken by him belly."

Monty chuckled. "Two ribs! Better than we hoped. You're positively prodigious, old chap." But there was no joy in his face. It was tortured again with the recurring effort of groping for some sinister motivation of Piet. He could put no finger on it, but a conviction of something malevolent had haunted him ever since Piet's first attempt.

"I say, old man." He was apologetic to Davie. "Don't let's sell to Piet."

Davie stared at him with eyes as widely innocent as Bubu Charlie's. "But—havers, man! Five pounds!"

Dembo grinned beatifically.

"Six pounds," he said.

"Six pounds?" Dembo's eagerness acted on Monty's racing mind only like a quickening drug. "There's the forked tail of Piet speaking."

"Sax poonds!" Davie breathed it reverently. "I'll e'en take it."

Monty flung himself over Davie's arm that reached to hand over the garment. Davie's purely unconscious upheave flung him back on his heels.

"Man!" Davie chided. "Ye verra near dropped sax poonds o' value i' the dirrt!"

All this by-play was upsetting Dembo's mental balance. He offered added incentive. "I buy twenty piece that much price."

"Twenty of 'em!" The sheer size of such a deal with a native gave Monty something to focus upon. He advanced upon Dembo, sternly accusative, a white man of the ruling class. "Chief Dembo, what damned use have you for twenty uniforms?"

DEMBO was floundering. He could, when properly whooped up by drums and rhetoric, perhaps shove a spear into a white man, but just now he was just

an African intelligence confused by the dominant race. He even turned his eyes away from Monty.

"Oah, I got no use," he excused himself. "He got use."

"He! Piet! You've admitted it. What does that green mamba want with twenty uniforms?"

"Oah, I don't know. He catch twenty piece clothes, he get plenty money job by some big fella white man."

Davie was doing rapid business calculations—costs, transportation, turnover. "Man, what the de'il does it matter?" he urged. "'Tis a goodly piece o' business. 'Twill pay the whole venture, an' the balance o' stock a clean profit."

Monty's whole frame shook with the intensity of his concentration. "There's the devil in this somewhere. That kind of a profit is just a snare. Give me a chance yet and I'll find it."

"Ten pounds!" Chief Dembo said, too anxiously.

Monty fired a finger at the chief like a shaky gun.

"Dembo, where've you got that much money?"

"Got him here," Dembo said calmly. "English gold."

Dembo clucked to one of his men. The fellow unstrung from his neck a sugar bag such as only an African would carry for the purpose; he blew a little loose dust from a depression and poured the contents out on the ground like so many flat *baazi* beans; his conception of values could grasp little difference.

THERE they lay and winked wickedly in the sun. English sovereigns. A little pile to tempt any sort of chance and be damned to all danger of the devil's contrivance.

Davie's freckles squeezed away from the knuckles of his hands; he inhaled his tuneless whistle.

Monty approached the pile suspiciously. Davie could see him sniff like a dog, as though to smell out some trickery in it. He poked at the shining disks with his finger.

"Good English gold," Chief Dembo said complacently.

Monty picked one up, felt it, tried to break it between thumb and finger. He handed it to Davie. "Here, you try it." But then he drew it back. "No, you would, of course." He bit on it.

English gold it was. English sovereigns, solid and genuine. Monty poked at the pile again.

And then Monty went suddenly mad!

"I've got it! I knew it! It's straight out of hell! Blast his festering soul!"

Davie was more shocked by the frenzy of profanity that flowed from Monty than by his utterly insane actions.

"Get in the truck and away!" Monty ordered it without any of his usual deference to Davie's ownership. "Dembo, you filthy dog, I'll shoot the guts out of— But you're only a stooge. It's that other devil! Get in, you! We're getting out of here!"

Davie was not to be deflected from good business by any mere access of mania.

"Count it out," he said to Dembo. "Twenty tens. And at that price ye can take your pick o' field marshals and commanders in chief." He turned to the truck to reach for them.

Monty flung his arms about him to hold him back. His effort was as futile as holding a derrick.

And then Monty suddenly let go of him. From somewhere about himself he whipped out a gun, shoved it hard against Davie's side.

"Get it!" he ordered. "We're getting out."

Davie backed slowly from the gun, staring, those formidable hands limp, the one loose by his side, the other raised in the instinctive impulse of holding that gorgeous blue and gold garment high out of the dirt. Monty, with the gun held close, herded him to the cab and poked authoritatively upwards.

"Aye," Davie said. "Ye surely are mad."

He climbed into the cab. Monty jumped behind the wheel with the agility of a man half his age. He crashed the gears. The car spurted gravel with a whining shriek; it suddenly caught hold on traction and plunged forward like a live monster deliberately bent on trampling the naked men before it. Monty didn't care whether it did. His

lips were strained away from his teeth, curses still dribbled from them. Black forms yelled, leaped like apes. A wheel crunched over Dembo's good English gold, spinning a glittering shower behind it. Monty didn't care. The truck lurched on, careening over hollows, crashing over boulders.

Davie looked back to see black men scrambling in the dust to retrieve little golden flames that burned in the sun.

"Aye," he said. "Surely mad."

Monty drove like a man fleeing a temptation of the devil in person.

Davie watched him covertly. So close. The gun was not in sight. One grab of his hand might change this crazy situation—if he grabbed just right. He didn't know. Monty had been a magician with that gun. Davie watched. The knuckles of his right hand began to show white.

And there, as he watched, Monty began to wilt before his eyes. The flame that had flared to such violent action was burning out. Monty drooped behind the wheel. His tall frame sagged down to the spent shell of a man who had wasted his stamina.

He let the car stop, leaned back, closed his eyes. He said: "Sorry and all that sort of thing, old man. I suppose I did act balmy."

"Aye," said Davie. "Quite mad. I saw ye steal a gold sovereign as ye poked in the pile."

Monty seemed very tired. He said only: "It wasn't a sovereign."

" 'Twas gold," Davie said bluntly. "I saw it."

Monty shook his head. His eyes still closed, he fished the coin from his shirt pocket and handed it to Davie. Davie looked at it, uncomprehending.

"The beastly thing looks just like a sovereign, doesn't it?" Monty said.

Davie was looking more at the collapse of Monty than at the coin. "Ye mean yon leery heathen blackamoor tried to shove counterfeit on us?"

Some of Monty's fire began to revive; his lips snarled away from his teeth. "Worse than counterfeit. It's a twenty-mark gold piece!"

"*German money!*" Davie's eyes flashed down to the thing. Suddenly it felt deadly in his palm, but he didn't as yet understand exactly why.

"That's the explanation," Monty said. "I knew damned well there was something hellish behind Piet, if I only could spot it."

IT was still too intricate for Davie to grasp. "Ye mean it's German money behind Piet wanting to buy back their uniforms, and this one got mixed?"

Monty nodded, he roused himself to explanation. "Laddie, there's hellish things you'll learn yet about Africa but this is one of the most damnable. Your father's psychology was that these uniforms would impress black savages. He was right. They were designed by the cleverest psychologists in Europe to impress peasant minds with the might and power of a military machine."

"Aye so. But a man would be thinking they had enough of their bedizenry in Europe."

"Not for Europe." Monty's teeth gritted over it. "For Africa!"

"For—Africa?"

Monty's nod was very grim. "Yes, for Africa. You weren't in the last mess, but they worked the trick then, as insidious as Satan. A few of the wrong white men in the right uniforms—generals, high officers, they say they are—they've come over especially to lead the black man to throw off the yoke—the old Empire is slipping, and all that sort of thing. They look like gods all dressed up for the parade; they have money; they're as impressive to the black man as a first class juju. And the devil of it is, old man, the black man is ripe these days to listen. A couple of damned reverses in Europe, and they'll pop."

Davie's gasp sucked between his lips like steam. "Losh, man! Why did ye not tell me? I'd ha hoist yon blackamoor to his heid on a muckle rock."

Monty was able to smile, though a little wryly, over Davie's awakening.

"Laddie," he said. "I've noted it before; for a man opposed to violence, your methods are thoroughly sound. But Dembo's only a stooge. He's useful because he can furnish a thousand men. He mustn't know that we know. So I

had to get you away. Other chiefs can furnish other thousands. Piet knows 'em all. If he can get uniforms for some of his renegade gang there's no limit to the amount of money that the Heinie fifth column won't give him to organize native rebellion. Piet is the first slime we must step on, and then there are some African slants on third degree that are dashed efficacious in making a man talk about his foreign friends."

"*We* must? Why would we not just be reporting him to the government exterminators?"

Monty shook his head. "Stepping on slime, a man can slip. We have nothing we can prove. Moreover, my dear old chappie, I've just been teaching you how easy it is for a bright lad to keep out of the clutches of our good old government. No, this is something that's up to our lone hands."

Davie pondered that. Till at last he had to nod his agreement. He filled his lungs with an enormous sigh. "Aye, I suppose ye're right. But 't'will cut fearsomely into the conduct o' business. Moreover, for a man o' no preenciples ye've passed up a grand chance o' makin' a fine commeesion."

Monty grinned at him with a sour curl to his lips.

"Dash it all, old man," he said. "There are some things that just aren't cricket, don't you know." And he immediately hastened to cover that expression of decent emotion by adding to it. "There are other ways of making a dishonest commission."

CHAPTER IV

A SCOT'S COMMISSION

THE night's camp was more carefully sown with traps than any previously

"We're enough off the beaten track," Monty said, "for a possibility of a lion or two. Or worse, Piet's next move."

Davie had not yet learned the Africander callousness towards lions. The thought of them prickled up and down his spine more uncomfortably than any anxiety about treacherous white men.

"What about a fire?" was his standard tenderfoot question.

Monty shook his head with an old-timer's amazing acceptance of danger. "The devil and the deep sea, laddie, are always a trader's choice. A camp-fire is a jolly old thing to drowse beside; but if there's a devil in the outer dark it shows him where to throw a spear. So the old mine field is definitely indicated. And we might just as well set the boys on a watch detail." His callousness appalled Davie.

And that night Monty disappeared!

Davie saw him go. He woke to the harsh *whroo* of a big brute of a spotted hyaena and the snickering laugh of its companion. All around the camp the two of them prowled, too wary to come in where the man smell lingered about the traps.

Davie heard Monty swear sleepily. He hesitated to display his rawness by asking whether anything should be done about the beasts. The malevolent chuckling of the one sounded as though it jeered at the other's hesitation. Between howlings he heard the Kikuyu boys who were supposed to be on watch snoring like soulless machines.

Till Monty grumbled something about sleep and sat up. He swore again and yawned. A *whroo-oo-oo* blasted at them as loud as a fog signal, apparently at the very edge of the camp. Monty damned them and fumbled for a rifle; he stepped out of the tent. Davie saw his dim form go zig-zagging through the mine field.

And he never came back!

Davie didn't know that until next morning, though. His nerves waited to hear a shot that didn't come; and then, since the hyaenas stopped their infernal howling and the watchmen snored comfortingly on, he gratefully relaxed and dozed again.

And in the morning Davie was alone.

There were four Kikuyu boys, ox-eyed and frightened witless. There were Gog and Magog, voluble, expressive with grimacing face and waving hands. But Davie might as well have been in central Sahara. What they jabbered was no more intelligible to him than his bewildered questions to them.

It was luck and the grace of God that the truck lasted as long as it did. . . .

More than at any time before Davie was appalled at the simplicity with which desperate situations could suddenly happen in Africa. The Kikuyus ran about as aimlessly as ants. Their bewilderment added to the blank hopelessness of the situation by making it clear that the black boys knew no more about anything than he did.

They spread out around the camp, looking, Davie supposed, for tracks. Presently the last black dot of them was lost behind rocky obstructions of the plain and Davie was left physically alone with his unpalatable thoughts to chew on.

He sat on his cot edge as he had sat that first night out, as motionlessly immersed in conjecture as the Rodin statue. When he ached from that pose he moved only to bring his hands together with interlaced fingers. He wasn't praying; he was expressing the flame of his concentration in terms of futile action; his knuckles, as he put the pressure on them, cracked like bamboo knots in a fire.

He thought inevitably of rats and the sinking ship. He remembered a hideous authentic account he had read about lions at some populous railroad camp that had come and snatched up a man every night until they had taken a hundred, and all that ever been found of the victims had been the horribly staring heads. He remembered what a strong tree to lean upon was that weak reed, dissolute and cynical Monty. He remembered Monty's very last words to him—there were other ways of making a commission.

Only yesterday, at Monty's suggestion, he had left half his goods with Bubu Charlie, who was so confident that he and Monty would see eye to eye about commissions. The truck had not traveled far over that boulder strewn plain; it would be quite possible for a man who knew his way around to walk back to Bubu's post of furtive trade.

Davie wondered whether in Africa there were callosities of bare faced banditry too tough for his native canniness that relied upon such civilized safeguards of business as itemized receipts. That forenoon was the longest year of Davie's life.

THE black boys drifted back. That useless little fact was an illumination to the dark prospect as bright as a blessing of God. At least the ship was not so hopelessly sunk.

The boys jabbered. What they said was completely and lucidly clear to Davie. They still didn't know anything.

Another year passed. What did a man do, Davie uselessly wondered, when African night had suddenly swallowed up his guide, his interpreter, adviser, mentor, his everything? Davie could think of not a thing to do more practical than to whittle at a bundle of tent pegs that needed sharpening.

Then a black dot moved on the far plain. It came directly towards the truck. From afar it waved its arms and shouted. The camp boys all shouted together.

The hurrying newcomer staggered in. Davie recognized him as one of Bubu Charlie's evil looking heathen. And then he knew that there was news and that all of it was bad.

The malefactor flung his arms about, rolled his eyes and jabbered. The camp boys flung their arms about and jabbered. Everybody jabbered all together.

Then everybody rolled ox eyes at Davie and stared in perplexed silence. Davie could have gone impotently mad. The tent peg that he held broke in his hands.

Gog and Magog jabbered at the Kikuyus. The Kikuyus shook their heads. Gog and Magog shouted furiously at them. They remained sullenly silent and made to move away. Gog and Magog rushed at them and herded them back. Gog flung himself upon one of them, dragged him before Davie and twisted his arm behind his back.

Davie understood that. It meant that, though the ship was sinking, all of the crew were not rats. The comfort of black heathen Gog was enormous.

Gog was thorough. He twisted the pusillanimous Kikuyu's arm until the man yelled. Magog came and grinned for approval. He struck the helpless Kikuyu on the chest and said: "Bwana Mon-tee." He looked to Davie for understanding.

Davie frowned in uncertainty whether he should put a stop to punishment that was, after all, rather drastic for just a desire to desert in the face of danger.

Gog twisted the man's arm till he yelled again. Magog struck Gog on the chest and said, "Dembo."

Then Davie got it. They were acting their story with African callousness to somebody else's suffering. Magog fell upon another Kikuyu, beat him about the head with fine realism, tied his hands behind him with tent rope. Gog let go of his victim, took up a spear and pricked at the man's belly with such a gusto for driving it deeper that the man screamed. Magog designated that one as Bwana Bubu. Gog, the torturer, again was Dembo.

Both of them let go of their unwilling minor part players and jumped up and down and yelled; they pranced, beat drums, war danced, howled ferociously. They pointed back in the direction of yesterday's travel.

Actions, louder than words, had all the lucid realism of drama cut down to its primitive essentials. Monty, Bubu, Chief Dembo, howling savages, torture. The stark bones of the plot. They were all that was necessary. The how of it all and the why and the numbers involved were details that acting might yet have portrayed. They were unessential. The *where* of it was the one important fact; and from the men's pointing and the circumstance of Bubu Charlie being in it Davie could guess the scene well enough.

Action, howsoever blind, was a relief that shouted from Davie's throat. He charged for the truck. He had no plan; he didn't know how to give orders to the men. Instructions by dumb show would take time, and Davie, with his straight-laced upbringing, could never have play-acted a line.

But he could, in his own subdued manner, swear his relief as strong men must when thought is not possible.

"THE de'il!" he kept whispering through lips tightly motionless and sucked dry of blood till they stood as pale and thin a line across the raw sunburn of his face as his straight sandy brows. "The fine big black de'il. May the guid Lorrd currse—" But that would be shocking, even before savages. Davie, with that inconsistent conviction of righteous people that profanity not understood loses much of its deadliness, said it in Gaelic: "*An Tighearn as an eudan mallaichidh e thu!*"

He didn't know that it sounded horribly worse.

He crashed the car into gear. Gog and Magog yelled and leaped to get aboard. A belated thought seared through Davie's mind. He stopped the plunging truck, backed it up, jumped out and set thriftily to throwing camp gear pell-mell within.

Gog and Magog howled to help, cursed the Kikuyus to help. They yelled their excitement for violent happenings taking shape; they didn't know what, but it would be worthy of the Bwana Chatu. The Kikuyus yelled under pain of the blows that drove them to climb aboard the truck for a journey towards peril most untasteful to them. Everybody yelled.

Davie yelled. *"Creag na theine!"* his hereditary slogan. It meant, "The Rock Afire!"

Davie, flaming, was going into battle —and for keeps!

The truck plunged, careened, roared forward as the terrain permitted; gears clucked out, crashed in; men grunted as each next smash jolted the breath from them.

Davie drove frightfully. On a civilized road of fair rolled stone he was no better than any other man of little experience; in this terrain he was a plunging menace to himself and to everything else. His only asset was that the most savage jerks of the wheel couldn't twist itself out of his hands.

It was luck and the sheer grace of God that the truck lasted as long as it did. Its time came when a low boulder hiding behind great piled rocks that the truck had to squeeze between—a boulder that it had passed over on its way yesterday—had contrived devilishly to grow two inches overnight.

The front axle smashed down on it. The truck's momentum shoved it over; it shuddered mightily, groaned and sank down as a thundering, charging elephant, mortally wounded, sinks to its knees.

Africans have none of the civilized relief of cursing at misfortune any more than in excitement. That is why they

yell. They duly yelled, eyes rolling.

The Kikuyu boys yelled as though they too were wounded to the death; Gog and Magog, yelled in their fury to kick out from under piled limbs.

Davie cursed—not in Gaelic. He got out and stepped round to survey the damage. On its knees the stricken truck was, the wheels bow-legged, the lamps stared drunkenly cross-eyed.

Davie stood and looked at it and the thought that groaned from his lips was one of Monty's grim truisms.

"The devil and the deep sea!"

Half his stock in trade at Bubu Charlie's post where a yet unknown danger threatened, and half bogged down in the middle of the African plain, where covetous heathen savages could crop out from behind the next rock. Himself between the two to make his choice.

But there were civilized gods to come to a righteous man's counsel and aid. The circumspect god who rules over business took shape before Davie's frowning eyes. A sleek god, fat and cautious. Half of his investment, that god counseled Davie, here and under his own hand, was at least safe.

"Aye so." It growled from Davie aloud just as though the incarnation of cautious business stood visibly before him. "Aye so. But—" It was another little god using Davie's voice to growl out of his throat; a god whom Davie in his sheltered life had never met yet. "Aye so. But at the other end there's Monte in some kind of a devil's mess," that god said.

"Monte!" the fat god whispered. "A man admittedly of no principle, in a mess that has grown, doubtless, out of some conniving of his with that other worse sharper, Bubu Charlie, to your detriment."

But at that the little god swore right out; swore like a trader who knows codes other than niggardly business.

"Ah, the hell!" that tough little god growled. "They're men anyhow."

AND with that Davie knew exactly what he must do. His face was twisted as a tree is twisted that is torn from its established roots, but he stepped up onto the wheel hub and reached into the truck for a weapon.

He had never used any weapon other than his hands, but he grimly knew that he was going to need one this time. The only weapon he thought he could use at all was the shotgun.

He got it out and fumbled at its mechanism.

The black boys all jabbered simultaneously. Gog and Magog looked anxious but took their spears. The Kikuyus looked more anxious and made to slink away. Gog and Magog herded them back.

It was then that Davie took oath with himself that his first next chore in this land would be to learn Swahili. He wanted the boys to stay with the truck. But how to make that complex point clear to them?

Davie solved it by picking them up bodily and setting them into the truck like luggage and then pressing them hard into place. Gog and Magog looked disappointed; the Kikuyus looked pleased. They all jabbered without surcease.

Davie roared at them. The jabbering stilled like mice. That was the first time Davie knew that authority over subordinates lies in nothing more than lung power and a red face.

He left them all there on the run, the slow jogging run of a strong man who is no racer but has an immense reserve of stamina to keep going after lesser men fail.

He still had no plan. He had been able to understand too little of what he might find to form any plan; nor was his mind in any condition to think about plans while his future career lay in two precarious halves and himself a moving dot in the immensity between them. Empty of thought, a lumbering great shape; or rather, in that indestructible homespun coat of his, the pockets bulging with cartridges, a shapeless portent on the African plain, he just ran, and kept on running.

It wasn't so very far to run, at that; not for a righteous man who had never impaired his stamina with drink and all the other costly allurements of sin. There was still daylight left when Davie heard

the clamor of howling that told him better than his remembrance of the terrain that he must be near the end of running and the beginning of—whatever it might be that he would have to do.

HE panted over a low rise and there was the whole scene laid out before him. A scene not so violent as he had anticipated. There was Bubu Charlie's trading post amongst its trees; there was the compound, jammed with black men; a hundred at least, Davie thought, with the sun twinkling picturesquely from a hundred spears. But the men were surprisingly quiescent just now, not war dancing.

Even Africans can get tired of leaping around and brandishing weapons. The men squatted mostly on their hunkers, waiting, it seemed; and while they waited every man shouted everything that was on his mind to make himself heard to his neighbor, who shouted louder.

Davie's heart panted up into his throat with the thought that perhaps it was all over, that there was nothing left to war dance about. He kept jogging ahead.

And then his heart pounded on up into his head with a fury that he couldn't stop to analyse. For he saw Monty and Bubu. They were tied each to a tree; and they were still alive; he saw them move.

Christian men—or at all events, white men, beset by heathen blackamoors!

And then Davie knew suddenly what he must do. He didn't know whether he would succeed; but it was the only thing to do. He must keep on advancing and attack the hundred blackamoor spearmen with his shotgun.

He had never fired off a shotgun. He didn't know how far it would carry; he thought perhaps two hundred yards. So at two hundred he stood and fired, pointblank with no elevation. He was appalled to see how far short the cloud of dust raised by the shot fell, but he was gratified to note how wide was the cloud; he wouldn't have to be so good a shot.

The blast of the gun was the first anybody knew of his coming. The squatting black men surged to their feet and brandished their spears until the sun flashed like fireworks; they couldn't yell any louder.

A huge black man ran to the front with a rifle. That must be Chief Dembo and the rifle must be one that Monty had taken from the camp to shoot the hyaenas—or had they been hyaenas?

"The crafty auld de'il!" Davie growled. "Wait till I get my hands to him."

Dembo raised the rifle. Dust spurted a yard to Davie's right before he heard the whip crack of smokeless powder. Davie stood to blast off his second barrel with an elevation of a good forty-five degrees. He didn't know whether with any effect; but black men leaped high and he had seen no splash of dust.

Dembo fired again. Gravel spurted in front of Davie's feet and a hornet buzzed over his head. Davie kept trotting forward, shoving two more shells into his gun. This time when he stopped and fired he knew he had hit something; for a little group of black men leaped like he had seen wildebeeste gambol and scrambled madly to get behind others.

Whing-ng-ng! A bullet came so close that Davie clapped his hand to his ear. Having, due to his ignorance of men and conditions African, no plans of strategy to follow, only the fixed idea of keeping coming and keeping shooting, it was not within the radius of his thought to duck, to find shelter, skirmish. There was no shelter anyhow and he didn't know how to skirmish. He stopped only to let go a blast in the direction of Dembo. He didn't hit him, but four other men beside him jumped.

Davie trotted doggedly on, shooting, shoving shells into the gun, shooting. He was getting close enough to blaze into the brown and the deuce with aim.

The naked men behind Dembo crowded back in a wide mad crescent.

Dembo fired again, but his own nerves were not holding out so well before the remorseless advance of this indestructible white man. His shot this time was away wide.

Davie blasted at him, both barrels together. Dembo lowed like a buffalo and rushed to get behind his followers who were behind him.

Davie shoved in shell, jogged ahead. All he could see of black men now was their naked backs, fighting to shove through backs that were before them.

If anybody shot at him, he didn't know it. At any rate he wasn't hit. He jogged grimly on. He knew that he was hitting pretty nearly every time now.

DEMBO was nowhere within sight now; he was lost in the naked herd that ran now like jostling gnu. Davie never knew that he was demonstrating all over again the old and deadly technique of keep a'comin' a'shootin'. He hardly knew that he had reached the compound and that it was empty. Blackamoors were before him and they were still within range.

Purposefully he trotted across the compound. The herd was streaming out on the farther plain, the speedier ones well ahead. *Wham!* But they were getting out of range fast.

Davie still had cartridges in his pockets, but Monty's voice stopped him.

"All right there. All right, Ithuriel resolute and grim. Come and get us out of this."

A little dazedly his normal self reasserted ascendancy over the fixed purpose that had obsessed him. He came slowly back to where Monty was tied to the tree—and he stared owlishly to note that Monty was able to hold his chin up and laugh.

"I've said it before, laddie. For a pacifist, your methods are most thorough. But come on, cut us loose. These blasted lashin's are gettin' to be annoying."

Davie felt in all his pockets and, "Losh!" he said. "I've no knife."

Bubu Charlie from the neighboring tree swore ferociously, "And the bloody sons ova baboon 'ave looted the 'ouse clean as army ants."

Davie walked dubiously round Monty's tree; he tugged at the criss-cross maze of tight rawhide.

"Tis a monkey's nest of knots," he grumbled.

"That's how Africans tie," Monty said. "Tie 'em wet and leave 'em to dry tight in the sun. Adds to a fellow's discomfort no end." He said it lightly enough, but the words came through his teeth. "Can't you do anything, old man? Sharp stone or something?"

It was then that Davie noted that Monty's flesh bulged over the lashings. "Guid Lorrd!" Davie tugged at the raw hide appraisingly. "Well now, maybe," he said, "ye'll maybe have to take a twinge."

He found a place where he could work his fingers under a stout thong. Monty sucked his lip in and bit on it. Davie worked the other hand in. It was a job to get those thick fingers under and well set. Then his shoulders hunched hard over and Monty felt the tremor of Davie's arms against his body.

Then, *pung-ng*, like a bass viol string the thong gave and Davie lurched forward. He unwound the yards and yards of rawhide from Monty.

"Aa-ah!" said Monty and slid down the tree to a slumped sitting position. Haggard he was and bruised, his face swollen, his shirt gashed and his skin through it, but he remembered the conventions. "Thanks, old man," he said. "What I mean, comin' and gettin' us. Splendid work and all that, don't you know."

"Och!" Davie felt abashed. "It seemed, the way yon heathen ran, it was simple."

Monty seemed to be suddenly very sleepy. "Simple when done," he murmured. "But it took its bit o' doin'. Go on, laddie, and root up Bubu's tree—what I mean get him loose. I'm—" Monty's head cracked back against the tree.

THE Bubu malefactors drifted back out of their hiding in the scrub. With throwing sticks, *rungus* and what not, they contrived to kill guinea fowl, served a meal. Monty explained with British reticence the meager how and why of the happenings that dramatic acting could not make clear.

"Dashed well ashamed of myself, gettin' caught with that hyaena act— Did it jolly well, though, didn't they? Well, the idea seemed to be to twist my arm to make me change my mind about sell-

in' out to the chief. Sort of thing isn't being done, of course. So then the whole gang barged on down to work on Bubu, get him to fess up about some of his hidie holes."

Bubu was full of hot anger about it. "Yes, and I'm goin' to bloody well find out which o' my boys squealed about the stuff bein' 'ere an' flay 'is blarsted 'ide."

Davie remained amazed about the fortitude of these men. Tarred with the trader brush and none too meticulous about methods, but too plain tough to be tortured into betrayal. He told them so, clumsily, haltingly.

"Oh, not at all, not at all." Monty made light of it. "Pretty dashed decent thing you did yourself, comin' to the rescue and so on—stiff odds. And you remember what I told you about African third degree? The discussion that you heard when you came along was whether it should be hot spear blades under the arm or the old ant and honey business. Rather ghastly prospect, you know."

Then Monty fell into a silence. What he had to say now was not so easy to make light of, but he boggled ahead into it.

"So the upshot of it all is, old man, we, er—well, we've decided we couldn't do it to you."

"Ye couldn't do what?"

"Well, er—to tell you the truth, old chap—" Monty contrived to twist something of his old cynicism into his battered face to help him through with it. "We had, ah—rather decided that this half of your goods was to be—well, our commission, don't you know."

Davie only nodded, quite calmly. In a land where the associations of men involved savage looting and life and very near death, questions of ethics that loomed with shocking import in civilization faded back to their relative proportion.

"Aye," Davie said. "I had, ye might say, almost suspected it. But I had planned—" His voice hardened down on this—"with yon good receipt in my hand to settle my score with the police and with their help to track my despoiler down, if I covered all of Africa."

Monty looked at him, rather startled. Then he grinned at Bubu Charlie's wide stare. "By gad, Bubu! I believe it. With the awful pertinacity of his race, don't you know, I believe he would have."

Bubu Charlie was more brazen about it. "Blime if I'll admit 'e 'h 'ave so much to grouse about. When a blarsted business firm 'andles goods—motor cars, or radios, or anything—'ow much commission do they knock orf?" He looked to Davie for confirmation of his question.

It was a new angle to Davie. He pondered it. And he had to admit. "Aye, commisisons on handling some goods run to thirty or more per cent."

"Well," Bubu justified himself. "We was 'andlin' your goods, wasn't we? Sellin' 'em for you, showin' you 'ow. Two of us. Well, twenty-five per cent apiece ain't so much. So orl right, you can take your bloomin' goods all safe an' sound like I 'id 'em for you from Chief Dembo an' you can go. But you don't need to go orf mad at us."

The argument was casuist and not very sound, but it gave Davie something more to ponder on. He digested it wooden faced before he gave his weighed opinion from the viewpoint of a man whose career is business.

"We-ell now, fifty per cent is a deesgraceful share o' commeession for a Scot to pay for any handling o' goods. But—" His eyes and lips showed the thin cracks of overstrained hard wood—"it is belike not too great a share to assign to two valuable partners."

Partners?" Both men shouted it. Bubu remained staring as round-eyed in surprise as a nocturnal lemur. Monty burst forth with, "I say, old man, d'you mean it? What I mean, like they told you, fellows of no principle and all that, don't you know."

The cracks in Davie's face opened to an almost grin. "We-e-ell," he measured his opinion out, "a man that wouldn't sell a uniform to a damned renegade has at least one preenciple left. Moreover and beyond, I could never, alone, catch yon slimy de'il Piet and get back my two uniforms that he stole the very first night out."

"By gad yes, Piet!" Monty gritted his

swollen jaws and winced. "Yes, there's still Piet to be stepped on."

"And," said Davie, dourly practical, "there's still the half o' our business stranded in the wilderness with heathen blackamoors thievin' it by the minute."

"By jove! I'd forgotten it. Bubu, you know any prayers to all the gods of Africa, you kneel humble and say 'em all night for luck. First thing in the morning we'll collect every boy you've got and jolly well scour the country side."

BUT whether gods of Africa or whether that little tough god who had driven Davie from his guardianship and sent him on the run to do what a man must do, luck—or perhaps it was reward—came.

In the night torches glimmered on the slope and a confusion of yelling bore down on the wind. Davie jumped for that potent shotgun. But Monty said, "It's no bally hyaena trick this time. They wouldn't light it up like a parade."

The yelling came boldly nearer with the torches and in it now was an undercurrent of chanting, the hum of Africans at work. Then a single torch detached itself and footsteps padded ahead, and there were Gog and Magog!

Their faces glistened sweat and their teeth grinned hugely white in the smoky light. They jabbered both together, each louder than the other.

"By jove!" Monty said. "I told you, laddie, you'd hired yourself a brace of men. They've rounded up the local populace and they've brought the whole bally shop along on their heads. They saved everything but the truck."

"Well," said Davie. "Well, now!" Davie's eyes had the stare, almost, of Bubu Charlie's. "The heathen blackamoors, eh? They did so, did they? Man, who'd ha thought it?"

"Laddie," Monty told him a little mournfully and more seriously than Davie had yet heard him speak, "you'll learn a lot of things in Africa yet; but this one a trader will remember: It's not the heathen black man who'll cheat you. He may spear you and take your goods in a fight, but he's not civilized enough to swindle you. It's the Christian white man you've got to keep the wary eye on. The Piets and— His cynical grin came out, completely engaging in the sheer brazenness of it, "and the Bubus and the Montys."

"Aye so," said Davie seriously. "I've learned to watch out at least for the Piets. As for these heathen blackamoors, I would be thinking they had earned a commission. How much would ye say, now?"

Both Bubu and Monte said it together. "A blanket apiece, and they'll be well pleased."

"We-ell now," said Davie gratefully. "That's not too much a commeession for a Scot to pay."

Men plummeted down from the Sandusky.

DISCIPLINE, NAVY STYLE

By EUSTACE ADAMS

AT 9:17 on that sunny June morning of 1918, Mike Hennesy's tough Irish heart was filled to overflowing with sweetness and light. He stood on the wharf, his large feet spread wide as if to brace him against the whiplash roll of a destroyer, while his blue eyes fondly considered the sleek gray length of U. S. Submarine Chaser 499, his first command.

From time to time Mike Hennesy tore his proud gaze away from the 110-footer, but only to shoot a quick and still incredulous glance at the shoulder straps which topped his starched white uniform. After nineteen years in the Navy, no man knew better than Lieut. "j.g." Michael Xavier Hennesy how fine it was to be an officer, at least for the duration of the war.

Now, after but two astonished weeks as an ensign, he was not only a lieutenant, junior grade: he was commanding officer of a man-of-war. To be sure, said man-of-war was an odd-looking affair of wood, in shape generally resembling an overgrown whaleboat. But there was a three-inch gun mounted on her fore deck, two Lewis machine-guns on the wings of her bridge and her purpose was to find and to destroy German submarines. And if that didn't make her a man-of-war, what would? Not bad, Mike told himself with a warm inward glow, for a mug who had once been as two-fisted a gob as ever drank his way along both sides of Sands Street, Brooklyn.

Mike's hard eyes were attracted by a very new, very yellow, Marmon Speedster which purred up to the shoreward end of the gangway of the S. C. 499. Behind its rakish wheel sat a young man in the uniform of a seaman, second class, and beside him was a chauffeur dressed in gray-green livery. The sailor slid out from under the wheel and the chauffeur took his place. With a punctilious salute the chauffeur drove the car away. The sailor climbed the gangway and disappeared into the foc'sle of the chaser.

Mike in his time had seen many things, but never before had he seen anyone, of whatever station in life, salute a sailor. This must be, he told himself, one of these college boys who had enlisted for the duration. He had heard that the mosquito fleet was filled with them. Scuttle-butt rumor even had it that aboard one of the converted steam yachts was a gob who had presented that same vessel to the Navy. Strange doings, Mike thought, but at that not much stranger than that he was an officer and a gentleman, with a paper signed by President Wilson to prove it.

PROUDLY Mike tramped up the gangway, saluted the deck and made his way forward to the wheelhouse. The door was open. He started to enter but came to an incredulous stop with one foot on each side of the combing, staring at the tableau which presented itself to his narrowing eyes. An officer—an ensign, by his single stripe—and an enlisted man were sitting comfortably relaxed with their feet cocked on the chart table.

"And listen, you big stiff," the sailor was saying, "if you hadn't fumbled in the last few seconds, we'd have—"

Instead of rising and throwing the gob clear over the next S. C. boat, the officer grinned expansively.

"Nothing to it, Hank," he said. "You fellows just didn't know how to carry the ball."

It took a lot to astonish Mike Hennesy, but he was astonished now. He had heard officers called big stiffs, and by their first names, but never to their faces. A quick flush appeared beneath the weathered skin on his cheekbones. He pulled the other foot over the combing.

"You, sailor!" he snapped from the doorway.

Instead of leaping to attention, the enlisted man looked around, then rose with an irritating lack of haste. The officer stood up more quickly. He was half a head taller than Mike, although not nearly as broad. And his chin, while not as truculent as Mike's, had a good hard slant to it.

"I suppose," he said, pleasantly, "that you'll be our new skipper, Lieutenant Hennesy. I'm Webster."

Mike, all his sensibilities outraged, shook hands without enthusiasm. The enlisted man had made no move to leave. He stood at a posture which, to a less critical eye than Mike's, might have passed for attention, but there was something in his demeanor which suggested that Mike, not he, was the intruder.

"Sailor," said Mike, breathing a little heavily, "unless you're on duty here, will you get to hell out of this wheelhouse?"

The gray eyes of the young man darkened. They raked Mike up and down with icy dislike. Then he was gone. Mike turned a purpling face toward the younger officer.

"Mister, did I see that enlisted man sitting with his feet higher than his head? Did I hear him call you a big stiff?"

Ensign Webster straightened the cap on his very red head. It had seen plenty of salt water, that grommetless cap. The bird and the anchor were green with

corrosion, as was the gold brain on his shoulder straps.

"That was Hank Cutting, Lieutenant," he said earnestly. "You know, the famous fullback at—"

"On a vessel," said Mike, "how would a fullback rank? With or after a single-striper?"

Young Webster flushed. Mike was about to go on, and in detail, but it came to him that he was in danger of losing his disposition. It behooved him, while taking command, to be tolerant, aye, even forgiving, to his subordinates. No telling what bad habits his predecessor had let them fall into. Time enough to straighten them out later. Little by little, that was the way. He arranged his wind-toughened features into a smile.

"Mister," he said in a voice so benevolent that the starboard watch on the *U. S. S. Terry* would never have recognized it, "with these U-boats sinking ships all the way up and down the coast, the sub chasers have to carry a lot of the load so the destroyers can convoy the transports. We—"

He was interrupted by a clear hail from the direction of the engine room hatchway.

"Hey, Wally!" came a youthful voice. "How about letting me overhaul this center engine? Or do we have to patrol again soon?"

Mike Hennesy started violently. His bushy eyebrows lowered over his angry eyes and his lower lip stuck 'way out.

"Mr. Webster," he said in a sultry tone, "would that be another fullback, or something?"

But there was no need for Mr. Webster to reply. A young man strolled into the wheel house. He was wearing the white-topped cap of a chief petty officer and the most disreputable dungarees Mike had ever seen. Beneath the liberal smears of grease on his freckled face, his smile was white and wide. That is, until he met the hostile impact of Mike's blue gaze.

"Oh, sorry!" he said, politely and attempted to edge out of the doorway.

"One minute, Chief," Mike snapped.

"Lieutenant," said Ensign Webster

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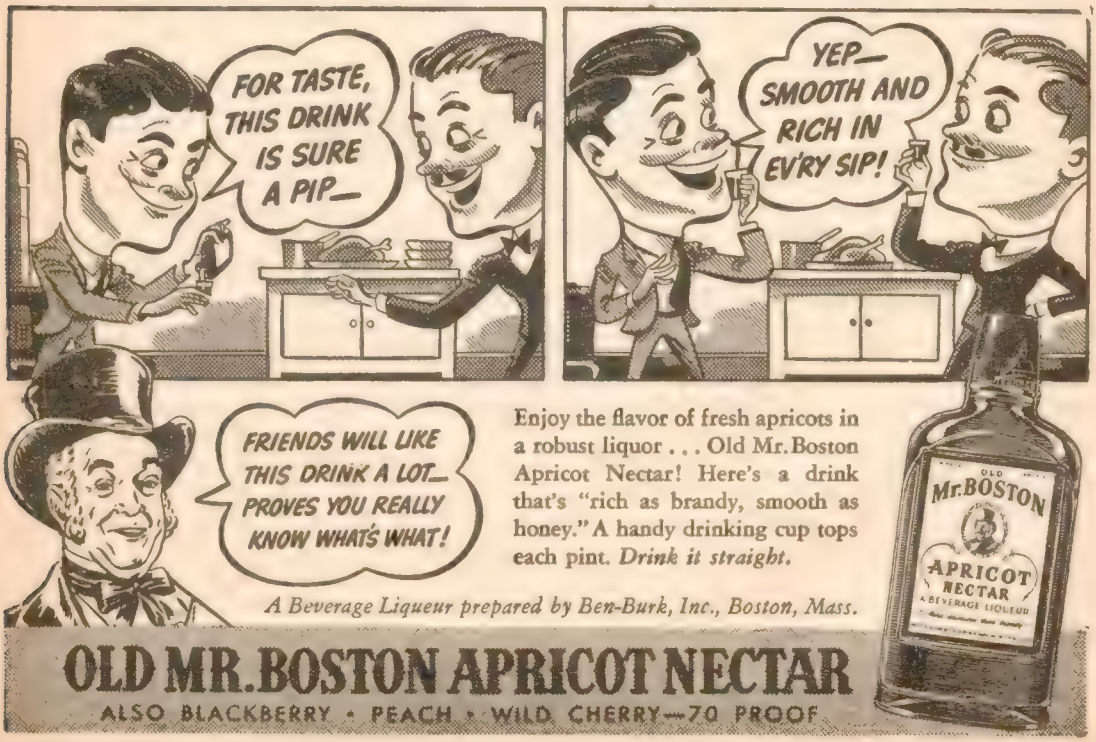
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hastily, "this is Jim Grover, our engineer officer. He's just been graduated in Marine Engineering at M.I.T., and he can make our engines laugh and play."

"Isn't that just lovely!" said Mike in a gritty voice. "And can he make them stand at attention and say 'Sir' to a commissioned officer?"

A frozen look came into the dark eyes of Chief Machinist's Mate James Grover. He pulled himself to rigid attention, saluted woodenly and said, "Sir, I have work to do, sir, if, sir, you will excuse me, sir?" and vanished.

Mike's impulse was to call him back, take him by the hair of his head and knock his skull against the bulkhead. But this, an inner voice warned him, was the ex-bo'sun in him surging to the surface. As a C.P.O. in the pre-war navy, he could have put this flip lad in his place with a few words of so sulphurous a nature that they would have peeled the paint from the hulls of adjacent vessels. But now, in command of a crew which seemed largely composed of boys who were fullbacks, and who drove expensive cars, and held engineering degrees at Massachusetts Tech, things were so different that Mike felt a strong sense of frustration. He was obscurely aware that he had been placed upon the defensive, and he could not imagine how this had come about.

"Lieutenant," said Ensign Webster, coolly, "perhaps I'd better tell you. Lieutenant Ingersoll, who was transferred away from this chaser two days ago, wasn't much of a stickler for discipline on a boat of this size. He knew most of the fellows were amateur yachtsmen and—"

"I can see," Mike interrupted, "that there is something lacking in the discipline aboard. How long have you had your commission?"

"Two months, sir. I went through the sub chaser school at Columbia."

"More college!" Mike murmured. "Mister, you don't have to remind me that there's more discipline on a battleship than on a motor boat. But if you were a commissioned officer in a ten-foot punt, you still wouldn't let an enlisted man put his feet in your lap and call you Wally. I've had no experience at all handling college boys or amateur yachtsmen. But I've had plenty of it handling sailors. And that's all these birds are to me. They are sailors in the U. S. Navy, no matter if their papas have enough money to use the battleship *Texas* for a steam yacht. I want a happy ship, but if it comes so I have to rush around shaking hands with my crew, and knocking off for tea in the afternoon, and asking them, please will they tail onto a line—well, Mister, if I have to do that to have a happy ship, it just isn't in me."

"I can see that, sir," said Ensign Webster, levelly.

"You can see what?" Mike demanded.

"That it isn't in you, sir," said the younger officer.

"Would that be a crack?" Mike asked, icily.

"I was just agreeing with you, sir."

Mike stared at him for some moments.

"Mister," he said at last, "I'm going to try to get along with you so long as you're my executive officer. But don't forget this; you're stuck with me. I can always put in for a new exec, and that would look bad on your fitness report."

"Would that be all, sir?" the other asked, formally.

"That's all," Mike snapped. "If you'll give it a little thought, you'll find it's enough."

THAT was the summer which saw half a dozen German submarines cruising from Cape Hatteras to Nova Scotia, sinking some fifty steamers, lightships and schooners by gunfire, mines and torpedoes. New York was partially blacked out lest one of the U-boats make its way through the steel net which protected the harbor and shell the city's skyscrapers. The United States cruiser *San Diego* struck a mine laid by the *U-151* and sank just off West Hampton Beach, Long Island. Vacationers at Orleans, on Cape Cod, watched the *U-156* come to the surface and take her time about sinking a string of barges and setting fire to the tug which pulled them.

That was the summer which saw the officers and crews of one hundred ten-foot submarine chasers become lean and haggard, remaining at sea every living

moment except when they had to put into port to refill their tanks and to make temporary repairs to their overworked engines. More than two hundred of these astonishing motor boats floundered across the North Atlantic, many of them during the hurricane season. In European waters, from Archangel to Corfu, they relentlessly and successfully hunted submarines. They got the work and the glory—and deserved both. Other hundreds, patrolling American waters, got only the work.

Young men, some of whom had never before been at sea, got tired and died out there, their bodies bruised beyond bearing by the continued buffeting. The medical records reported that they died of the flu and flu was the reasonable excuse for their dying. Certainly it would not have been reasonable to report that this 'teen-age youngster or that had died of seasickness, or of weariness. So there was always the flu, which struck like lightning at their exhausted bodies and killed almost as quickly.

Even Mike Hennesy's tough and solid figure thinned down after seven weeks of ceaseless patrol. He had thought that his years in the destroyer flotilla had taught him everything there was to know about the way a vessel could pitch and roll in a seaway. But the old seven hundred fifty ton destroyers were stable ships compared to these fifty ton chasers, which frequently rolled through a 140-degree arc, seventy degrees each way, then shook themselves like wet cats and went on about their duties.

Hanging grimly to the wheelhouse window, Mike stared ahead through the curtain of rain and spindrift, trying to catch sight of the cliffs of Block Island, while beneath his feet the *S. C. 499* was pitching and yawing wildly in a following sea.

"Watch her, Bellew," he cautioned the quartermaster, the boy who had driven the yellow Marmon to the wharf that first morning. "Don't let her stern come around."

Young Bellew was in bad shape. He had a big towel looped around his neck and every now and then he vomited into it. Mike was sorry for him, but there was nothing he could do to help him. Practically every man in the crew was sick. Mike was more than a little seasick himself. And those who were not, were so exhausted that they needed what rest they could get, which was little enough.

"Don't let her stern come around, sir." Bellew repeated in a choked voice. He looked about ready to fall flat on his face, but he had not forgotten to say "Sir." Nobody had forgotten since that first morning.

Mike tapped the barometer. The pointer instantly dropped two one-hundredths, to 29.51, and Mike's heart dropped with it. This screaming southeaster would be worse before it was better. Fervently Mike wished he could order the course changed and run in under the lee of Montauk Point so his crew could have a hot meal or two and a decent night's sleep. But there had been three new sinkings between Atlantic City and Cape Henry and Mike's orders had been to go out and stay out, patrolling the outer entrances to Block Island Sound.

Watch and watch, four hours on and four off. And the trouble was, you got no sleep in a storm. You had to lie face down on your berth, arms and legs flung wide to brace you against the terrific motion. And as soon as you dozed off and your muscles relaxed, you would find yourself on the deck, the pain of your bruises dulled by the fatigue poisons in your body. But after a while there was no part of you that did not ache like an abscessed tooth.

DIMLY, as he clung to the handrail and squinted ahead for his landfall to the eastward, Mike tried to remember that morning only a few weeks ago when he had been so proud, so happy, because he was the possessor of a stripe-and-a-half and an independent command. But on account of all the things which had happened since, that bright June morning was obscured in a fog of weariness, of unhappiness, of disillusionment. These kids, he was forced to admit, had just about licked him.

Somewhere Mike had heard of men being put in Coventry but he had never

given thought to the heartbreaking implication of that phrase. In these seven endless weeks, only three men of his entire crew had spoken to him save in line of duty and then in terms of strict formality. And even these three exceptions, regular navy men like himself, had been none too cordial.

Mike Hennesy was a gregarious man. He liked people and wanted people to like him. The thing his crew had done to him burned like acid to his very bones. When he had first become aware of the curtain these college kids were drawing between them and himself he had been amused. So when they looked at him with their frozen faces, and saluted too frequently, and said "Sir" several times in each sentence, and stood at wooden attention whenever he entered the foc'sle or engine room, he had for a while thought it funny.

This executive officer of his, Wally Webster: he was a clean youngster and, for an amateur sailor, fairly salty. But that Webster should side with the crew and act as they did, outraged Mike's sense of the decencies. Not openly did Webster side with them. They saluted him and said "Sir" just as often as they did to Mike. But this was the fundamental difference; they smiled when they did so, and he smiled back. It was, Mike guessed, as if every member of the ship's crew except himself and the three regular navy seamen belonged to the same exclusive fraternity, a fraternity which he would never be allowed to join because he saw them as sailors, as enlisted men of the United States Navy, instead of as gentlemen and amateur yachtsmen. But even the three regulars were sort of halfway members. The college boys chatted and joked with them—except when Mike was within hearing, when there was no chatting or joking at all.

Reflecting upon this as the *499* pitched and yawed under the drive of those wicked seas, Mike's unhappiness deepened. Lucci, Mueller and McGuinness were of the Old Navy, and so was he. He knew their way of thinking. If they became unruly he would be able instantly to handle them. Yet all three had somehow learned to understand the college boys, and he had not. Perhaps the answer was this: these sons of gentlemen, who had enlisted only for the duration of the war, objected to taking orders from a rough-neck, while the regular navy men had learned to obey anyone in an officer's uniform.

The most discouraging thing was that Mike did not know what to do about it. But he did know he could not go on being as lonely as this for whatever months or years the war might continue. His natural instinct, deep-rooted after so many disciplined years, was to bear down on Webster and his crew of reservists. That was the way you did it in the Navy. If a crew became sulky you sweated it out of them. But how could he sweat it out of these gaunt, red-eyed youngsters who got their work done and who never once complained of lack of sleep, or of going days without one hot meal, or of being herded together under leaking hatches in an atmosphere reeking with the smell of their own bodies and of vomit? Not once had they done anything he could point to and say, "For that, sailor, you'll do a chunk of extra duty." There was nothing in regulations demanding that a sailor salute or pass the time of day with his commanding officer.

The radio operator, a Princeton kid, staggered into the wheelhouse, slid down the slanting deck to the windows, saluted and passed Mike a message. S.O.S. *A steamer torpedoed three hundred miles southeast of Sandy Hook.* With an effort Mike focussed his tired mind upon that location. It was well out of his patrol area, a job for the destroyers out of New York, Newport and Boston. A U-boat, he thought, on her way back to Germany. Or another coming to American waters. In any case, the *S. C. 499* must still patrol.

Young Webster reeled in, his chin dark with unshaven beard, his eyelids red and heavy from lack of sleep.

"Sir," he said with a salute which was much too formal, "I am reporting for duty."

Even in weather like this the boy kept his mask on, made a burlesque of traditional navy routine. More than anything Mike could think of—more, even, than sleep, or hot food, or a steady deck

under his feet—he wanted to smack the foolishness out of this kid who had made his command such a heartbreaking disappointment. But Mike took a long breath and fought his temper down. Webster's nerves had been on a wire edge for the past two or three weeks. Mike's own tough body felt as if it had passed through a rock crusher after only seven weeks of patrolling and Webster had been rolling around on the *499* for twice that time. He had taken plenty of punishment and it was little wonder that his fingers shook as he reached for the hand rail to prevent himself from being pitched into the after corner of the wheelhouse.

"She's yours, Mister," Mike said, holding his voice level. "Keep a sharp lookout for Block Island, because it's getting thicker all the time. There'll be a strong tide setting into Long Island Sound, but I got a good fix at Montauk Point and I think I've made enough allowance to clear the island. We ought to be sighting it off the port bow any minute now."

From the crow's nest came a hail. "Sail ho!"

Mike looked at Ensign Webster. The executive officer appeared not to have heard the hail. A tiny muscle was jerking at one corner of his thin, sensitive lips. He had thinned down a lot. But so, as a matter of fact, had everybody.

"Sail ho!" the lookout repeated.

Mike waited a moment more, then turned abruptly to the open window. "Where away?" he shouted.

"Two points off the port bow."

MIKE reached for the glasses, braced his elbows on the drop sash and got his focus. Through a break in the rain he found a camouflaged freighter of the Great Lakes type, wallowing eastward on a parallel course to the chaser's, but a mile or so to the north. Slowly the plunging *499* was overtaking her.

"If I was captain of her," Mike murmured, "I'd be wanting more sea room than he's going to get."

He turned away from the window. Ensign Webster was still staring at him, his eyes dark with dislike.

"Mister," Mike said irritably, "you reported for duty and I turned the ship over to you. Why didn't you answer the lookout's hail?"

"I don't know that I heard it," the boy said.

"Aren't you fit for duty?" Mike asked, sharply.

"Yes," the executive officer said, and added in the way Mike hated, "I mean, yes, *sir*."

"Listen, Mister," said Mike, his disposition frayed to a ragged edge, "if you don't stop trying to get my goat, you are going to get it, and then you and I are going to have trouble in great, big hunks. Why don't you stop being a spoiled kid and grow up?"

The *499* lurched violently as she lifted her transom high into the air and raced like a surfboard down the slope of a following sea. Bellew passed the spokes of the wheel rapidly through his hands, working to catch the swing. Mike's rugged chin tipped as he waited to feel whether or not she would broach. But young Bellew was an expert helmsman. He caught her just in time.

Ensign Webster had scarcely noticed.

"I'm to stop being a spoiled kid, am I?" he asked on a rising note. "Why don't you stop being a bo'sun for a while?"

"Wally!" Bellew cried over his shoulder. "Stop it!"

But the boy was not to be silenced before he had his say. "I'll tell you why!" he shouted wildly. "It's because you can't. Before you came aboard we had a happy ship. Oh, we forgot a few salutes and a few 'Sirs', but we got along fine and we had as efficient a ship as there was in the flotilla. But now—" His white lips curled with contempt. "They could put all the gold braid of an admiral on you and you'd still be a bo'sun at heart. It would stick out all over you, so everyone could see it, like the crew has been seeing it ever since—"

"Mr. Webster!" Mike's voice sounded hardly louder than a whisper, yet it cut through all the sounds of the storm, the whine of the wind, the slamming of the seas on the after deck and the quickly-quenched protest from the engines as the propellers came out of water. "Mr. Webster, belay that. If we were ashore I'd

take off my blouse and lick some sense into you. But you're on duty now and you have a landfall to make. Watch your ship or—"

"I've been waiting a long time to—" the boy interrupted.

"You can wait a little longer," Mike cut in, crisply. "Watch your ship or I'll log you and that will cost you your stripes."

"You think I care?" Webster yelled.

"Wally!" Bellew cried in a begging way.

"I haven't any career in the navy to worry about," Webster went on recklessly. "I only enlisted for the duration of the war. So suppose they set me back to a seaman—what of it? I'd rather live in the fo'csle than in the wardroom with you! And you—if you weren't in the Navy you'd be lucky to get a berth as captain of Ted Bellew's yacht. It's forty feet longer than this chaser. And then you'd be saluting him, and saying, 'Sir' to him, and—"

"Wally!" Bellew protested, fighting the wheel hard.

But Webster was beyond all reasoning. He took one hand from the rail and braced himself against the motion. He reached up and yanked the black-and-gold shoulder straps from their loops.

"There!" he shouted, hurling them at Mike's feet. "I've beaten you to it. For the privilege of telling you what we all think of you, it's worth it and—"

"Mister," Mike snapped, "you are under arrest. Go below."

"And if I don't?" Webster raged. "Can you put me there?"

"With one arm in a sling," Mike said in a harsh voice. "But I wouldn't bother. I'd call the crew and have them do it."

"Wally!" Bellew cried, unhappily. "Go below! If he tells us, we'll have to obey orders!"

Webster stared at his friend, while Mike, all his muscles taut beneath his bedraggled uniform, watched him closely. The unrestraint seemed suddenly to run out of the boy. He pushed himself away from the hand rail, staggered across the pitching deck to the companionway and vanished.

"Lieutenant," Bellew said in a strained voice. "He didn't mean what he—"

"Watch your steering," Mike snapped. "or she'll broach."

HE SQUINTED ahead through the flying scud, through the driving rain, wanting his glimpse of the Block Island cliffs, but there was nothing yet. He stared soberly down at the shoulder straps which still lay on the deck. He had been almost nineteen years winning his first stripe and the kid had gotten his in three months. Maybe that was why he had valued them so lightly that he could tear them off and throw them down. He picked them up and held them for a moment in his calloused hand, just looking at them. He pulled open a chart drawer and put them carefully away.

As low in his mind as he had ever been in his life, he lifted the glasses out of their rack. A really good officer would never have let a boy get so wired up he would do a thing like that. But how he could have prevented it, Mike did not know. The college kids had ganged up on him as soon as he had told them to observe some degree of navy discipline. Maybe he was a bo'sun at heart, at that. But you couldn't spend nineteen tough years in the service and then forget all the things you had learned just because a lot of college boys had enlisted for the duration of the war. But they weren't bad kids, Mike admitted to himself, and they weren't bad seamen, and he wished he had somehow contrived to learn how to handle them.

He got himself braced at the window and studied the silhouette of the freighter. He was troubled because she was to the north of the *499*. He was not certain that he himself had allowed enough for the set of the tide between Montauk and Block Island, and the captain of the freighter was allowing even less. But just as he began really to worry about this he saw something which wiped it out of his tired mind. From her foc'sle head and, a split-second later, from her after deck, appeared tiny dots of flame.

Mike yanked his head in out of the weather. "Hard a-starboard." he yelled and reached for the engine room telegraphs.

Before he had time to shove the han-

dles to "Full Speed Ahead" he heard the lookout's wild yell, "Bridge! They're shooting at us!" And with the lookout's call came the scream of two shells which rocketed over the chaser and exploded in the water somewhere to starboard. There was no time to worry whether or not the chaser would broach, no time to wait for a series of relatively easy seas. He slapped the telegraph handles and answering jangles told him the engine drivers were on the job. The *499*, answering her hard-over-helm, skated down the slope of a wave, turned and then broached into the trough with a roll that was almost a complete knockdown.

It was queer, Mike thought, as he slid down the floor and crashed into the port bulkhead, how your mind could be busy with two things at the same time. While he held his breath, waiting to see whether the wooden ship would ever come up or not, another part of his brain was thinking that he didn't blame the gun crews of the freighter. In a seaway like this an S. C. boat looked so much like a submarine that most of them had been fired upon at one time or another. Not long ago, off Fire Island, the freighter *Felix Taussig* had shot the *S. C. 209* into splinters, killing both officers and fourteen of her crew.

Now the *499* was shaking herself loose from the seas and righting herself. Mike worked his way to the window. The forward hatch opened and sailors began to climb to the wildly rolling deck.

"Lay below!" Mike roared at them. "Lay below, before you're washed overboard!"

He zigzagged to the door of the radio room.

He was just in time to meet the operator head-on.

"A freighter close by is being chased by a sub!" the operator panted.

"The hell she is!" Mike snarled. "Tell 'em to stop shooting at us. Smartly, now, before we're blown out of the water."

A shell shrieked past with so flat a trajectory that Mike ducked instinctively. Every plank and frame of the *499* shook with the concussion of the nearby explosion. But the chaser was now stern-to and racing away from the freighter. The steamer, too, was turning sharply away from the supposed U-boat. Now she could bring only her after gun to bear. Two wicked shells ripped past the chaser before her camouflaged hull dissolved in the rain-curtain to the north.

Mike clung to the hand rail, weak and sick from the reaction.

"Quartermaster, resume your course," he commanded, and pulled the telegraph levers over to "Standard Cruising Speed." Bellew spun the wheel and brought the *499's* stern to the heavy seas.

The companionway opened. A quartermaster watched the waves for a moment, then raced aft. Presently he appeared in the wheel house, ready to relieve Bellew, who looked as if he could not stand up thirty more seconds. But his relief did not appear to be in much better shape. It was Hank Cutting, Mike noted without interest—the youngster who had been sitting with his feet on the chart table when Mike had come aboard to take command. The fullback from some college or other, who had looked at Mike as if Mike's Sands Street tailor had done a clumsy job of fitting. Cutting

They got the work and the glory—and deserved both.

saluted punctiliously and there was no friendliness in his tired eyes as he glanced at Mike. Bellew gave him the course and then tottered out of the wheelhouse.

"She's yawing badly," Mike said. "Don't let her broach."

"Don't let her broach, sir." Cutting repeated, and there was that same old contemptuous slur when he said, "Sir." But Mike was too tired, too low in spirit, to take offense.

He had made up his mind. As soon as the *499* returned to port he would put in for a transfer back to the fleet. Whatever it took to be a successful commander he lacked, because he could not even win the liking and respect of his own men. It took more than a parchment signed by the president to make an officer and a gentleman out of a bos'un.

THE radio operator raced in. Dully Mike scanned his message. Another S.O.S. This time it was the *S. S. Sandusky*. Her bow, she reported, was high on the rocks near South East Light, Block Island, but her stern was in deep water. She was being pooped by heavy surf and slowly broaching. Lifeboats and deck gear washed away. Help urgently requested.

An electric shock ran through Mike's fatigue-drunk mind. Sandusky. A Great Lakes name. And the freighter which had just disappeared into the storm to the northward was of the Great Lakes type. She must have run ashore almost immediately.

"Tell them," said Mike, grimly, "that the S. C. boat they've been trying to blow out of the water is coming. Quartermaster, port your helm." He blew down the speaking tube.

"Engine room, sir," said the acid voice of Chief Machinist's Mate Jim Grover.

"Belay the 'Sir' long enough to listen," Mike snapped. "Give me 370 revolutions. Put your three best engine drivers at the controls. We'll be needing them in a few minutes."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the voice, still cold and unfriendly.

In any other mood Mike would have been sorry for the black gang working down there in a blue fog of exhaust gases, staggering along slippery steel walkways and being thrown against hot engines whenever they missed a hand hold. Most of them were wearing greasy bandages. They were dripping sweat, seasick and half-choked by the reeking smoke. But they kept their engines running, and never once forgot to say "Sir" to their commanding officer.

The rhythm of the engines increased and the *499*, now slogging through a quartering sea, rolled and pitched like a thing possessed. Mike strained his aching eyes, trying to see through that driving rain. Word had, as always, mysteriously passed through the full length of the chaser that something unusual was afoot. The companionway hatch slid partly open and two or three heads came out for a careful look around.

"Land ho!" the lookout cried.

"Where away?" Mike bellowed.

"Two points off the starboard bow, sir."

"Do you see a steamer ashore there?" Mike roared. Then, "Never mind. I can see her myself."

The high bluffs of Block Island were coming out of the rain not more than three-quarters of a mile to leeward. And there, looking as if she had tried to climb those jagged cliffs, was the freighter which had so narrowly missed hitting the *499* with her bow and stern guns. Mike remembered the thick rain squall which had closed in around her just as she had turned to run away from the supposed submarine.

"Head straight in for that wreck, Quartermaster," Mike said, ringing the engines down to slow speed ahead.

With his glasses he ranged the top of the cliff for some sign that the surfmen from the nearest life-saving station had reached the scene. But even as he looked he knew it would be almost impossible to rig a breeches buoy. They would have to come around from the east side in a surf boat and that would take time. More time than the shipwrecked crew would have. Seas were surging forty feet up the cliffs in a smother of foam. The *Sandusky's* stern, now projecting straight out into the wind and sea, would soon swing around. And when her entire length started to batter against the cliffs

no man aboard would live more than a few minutes.

There was no chance whatever to circle around and come alongside to leeward. There was no leeward, with wind and sea whooping along both sides of the *Sandusky*. Nor was there any room to circle. Shoal water, to judge by the breakers, began about amidships of the freighter's four hundred-foot length. He would have to go in head-on, then back away, trusting to his own skill that the chaser did not broach or go surfboarding in on the slope of a wave.

Now there were half a dozen heads protruding from the foc'sle hatch, all turned toward the freighter and the menacing cliffs beyond.

"Bosun!" Mike called. "Break out a heaving line. Flake the five-inch hawser out on the port side."

The chaser was running in too fast. The wind and following sea were taking charge. Mike held his breath as he rang up full speed astern, but felt better as the propellers promptly bit into the water and checked her headlong forward pace.

"Son," he said to Cutting, "you're doing fine, but I'm going to take the wheel. You stand by the engine room telegraphs."

A QUARTERMASTER of the Old Navy would have been astonished to have a commissioned officer take over the helm. But Cutting was not astonished. Matter-of-factly he turned the wheel over to Mike. It was good to get the real feel of a ship again. Many and many had been the trick at the wheel Mike had stood on navy tugs, destroyers and battleships. And to know exactly how a vessel would answer her helm there was nothing like having your hands on the wheel. An Annapolis man, Mike knew, would never think of laying a finger to a spoke. Which was just one more proof of the fact that he was not officer material. Well, to hell with that. Lieutenant or bosun, he had forty or fifty men on the *Sandusky* to save and his own crew to look out for.

He glanced down at the fore deck and blinked. A red-headed young man in the uniform of an officer, but lacking shoulder straps, was laboriously working his way forward. The chaser yawed sickeningly. Webster skidded forward, came to a bone-jarring stop against the gun mount, then began to oversee the work of flaking out the hawser.

A huge wave lifted the *499's* stern and tried to throw it to starboard. A kick astern on all three engines and she was under full control again. Now the chaser was almost under the steel counter of the *Sandusky* and the breakers were only two or three hundred feet beyond. Mike pulled a trifle to port, letting his boat inch forward to come alongside the freighter's stern—but not too close. Her fragile wooden sides would be crushed in like a rotten melon if the sea heaved her just once against the rivet-studded plates of the steamer. Webster, in the bow, had two sailors at the rail, ready with fenders. But even fenders wouldn't help if Mike once lost control and let the bow swing in.

From Mike's tight lips came a steady flow of orders to young Cutting. "Port engine, slow astern. Stop. Center engine, slow astern. Starboard engine, full speed astern. Stop."

The jangling of bells was almost continuous as Cutting jerked and shoved at the telegraph handles and as the engine room answered its signals with speed and precision. The chaser's bow had now crept past the *Sandusky's* stern. Compared to the relative steadiness of the wrecked steamer the motion of the one-hundred-ten-footer was appalling. Now her bow lifted almost to the height of the freighter's rail, then it fell until the boot-top and copper-painted bottom of the big ship towered over her like a varicolor skyscraper.

"Heave your line!" Mike bawled.

To his surprise it was young Webster, not the bosun, who heaved his coiled line. But his aim was perfect. The monkey's fist bounced off the after house and three men fell upon it at once.

Mike's voice roared through all that noise and confusion.

"Pass it forward!" he roared at the *Sandusky's* crew. "Take the hawser aboard and make it fast to your 'midships bitts!"

He saw young Halsey pass the end of the heaving line through the chock, stagger with it to the hawser and make it fast with a becket bend. Then the hawser began to snake forward through the chock and climb toward the deck of the *Sandusky*.

The *499* had drifted too far forward. Mike set his teeth as Cutting rang full speed astern on all engines and waited breathlessly to see if he could get sternboard on her before she touched the rocks which seemed directly under her bow. But inch by inch she clawed her way astern, while the seas smashed against her transom with blows which shook her from truck to keelson.

Now the hawser extended at right angles to the *499* as it slanted upward to the deck of the freighter.

"Take a turn around the bitts," Mike yelled to Webster. "Pay out slowly until I tell you to snub her."

Webster raised a hand in reply and somehow in all that turmoil Mike found time to be glad he had not saluted. Now the job was to get the chaser's bow close enough to the *Sandusky* to let the men jump aboard. There were perhaps fifteen feet of geysering water between them. He must close that up to six or eight—but not more nor less.

"Snub her!" he yelled at the crew on the forepeak. And to the quartermaster, "Stop both wing engines. Slow astern on the center."

The heavy hawser twanged and vibrated as the pull of one propeller tugged against it. It was acting now almost as a spring line and little by little the plunging *499* swung inward toward the great steel hull beside her. Cutting, his face dead white, his eyes rounded as the buttons of a pea jacket, stood with his hands on the port side telegraph, ready at Mike's command to kick her ahead and away if she drifted too close. But the steady strain against the hawser was holding her in place. The bow lifted until it was scarcely half a dozen feet below the rail of the wrecked ship.

"Jump!" Webster yelled.

And down the men came. The sailors on the chaser steadied them as they fell and hustled them below and aft, herding them like geese to get them out of the way and to lessen the danger of their being licked off the deck by the sea. The bow fell. Webster's palm went up in warning, holding them up there at the rail until a wave got under the bow again. Then he beckoned them to jump. And all the while Mike was struggling to hold her there—exactly there—with the expertness of his hands and his deep, hard-earned understanding of the ways of ships and the sea.

FOUR times the bow surged upward and men plummeted down from the *Sandusky*. Some, Mike noticed, were in navy uniform. Those would be the gun crews, and to hell with them for shooting so fast. On the next rise no more men jumped aboard. Webster lifted his arm to Mike in signal that the job was done.

"Cut that hawser!" Mike roared. And to Cutting. "All engines, slow speed astern!"

The bosun, reeling on that unsteady deck like a drunken man, slashed cleanly at the hawser with an axe. The severed line slid out of the chock and vanished. Webster and his crew were swiftly, efficiently, clearing the forward deck of men. Dimly Mike was aware that someone had entered the wheelhouse behind him, but there was no time to look around.

The three screws were getting a bite on the water and the gallant little *499* was fighting her way astern. The mammoth rudder, torn loose in these few minutes from its gudgeons, slid slowly past and beyond the chaser's bow. And the *499* was at last clear.

Mike suddenly discovered that his arms and legs were shaking so badly he could no longer steer.

"Son," he said raggedly, "take over the wheel. We can turn now." He staggered to the telegraphs and rang slow speed ahead on all three engines. "Ease her around to starboard," he told Cutting and hung tightly to the hand rail while he fought through his moment of weakness.

She did not roll quite so badly as she came around through the trough of the sea. Webster had put a lot of weight below when he had herded the ship-

wrecked sailors off the decks. But she rolled badly enough. When she was heading into the seas Mike turned to the quartermaster.

"We'll hold this course until we get some sea room," he said. "Then we'll put in at Great Salt Pond."

"Yes, sir," said Cutting and this time, to Mike's astonishment, there was no contemptuous slurring of the word. "It'll be too heavy to enter Block Island Harbor with this easterly."

Mike stared. "You know these waters?"

"Yes, sir," said Cutting, quietly. "I've sailed them for years. And listen, Lieutenant," he went on in a rush of words, "never in my life have I seen anything like the way you went in there, sir."

"And neither have I," said a fervent voice from behind them.

Mike turned his weary body. Two officers were standing there. One in the uniform of a captain in the merchant service, the other a chief petty officer of the U. S. Navy. Mike's eyes slid easily over the captain and came to a hostile stop on the sun-tanned face of the chief gunner's mate. Mike took a long breath.

"And you, Pat Dugan," he said in a voice which almost shook the binoculars from their rack. "For fifteen years you've always been too wishful for a fight. So now you wanted to fight a poor, little S. C. boat, did you? For two cents—"

"Sure, Mike," the C.P.O. broke in, then stopped, embarrassed. "I mean, Mr. Hennesy, I thought you were a sub and—"

"Pipe down!" Mike roared. "Once we're in the harbor I'll take off my stripes and talk it over with you and—"

He stopped suddenly. He turned to the chart drawer, took out two salt-corroded shoulder straps. "Mr. Webster!" he bawled.

"He's down in the fo'csle, sir," Cutting called from the wheel.

Mike steadied himself for a moment, almost too tired to work his way forward along the reeling deck. But he drove himself out of the shelter of the wheelhouse. His heavy head tipped down against the lash of the wind and the spray, he moved forward in a bent-kneed shuffle. As he stooped to slide the fo'csle hatch, a sea came over the bow in a solid green wall, but somehow he managed to hold on. He got his feet over the combing and began to descend the companionway into the fetid atmosphere of the crowded foc'sle.

"Attention!" somebody cried sharply.

The room was jammed with men.

"As you were," Mike snapped into the sudden silence.

Young Webster, his wet uniform looking as if it were pasted to his powerful body, was on his knees, bandaging the leg of a rescued seaman. He glanced up at Mike as his fingers tucked the last end of the bandage under the spirals. He pushed himself to his feet.

From somewhere forward in the press of men came a raucous whisper, "That's old Hennesy! And is he sea-going!"

"Pipe down!" said a C.P.O., sharply.

Mike stood where he was, one large, hairy hand clinging to a stanchion. Every man was staring at him. Mike's face more and more resembled the color of red flannel underwear. Twice he opened his hard lips to speak before words finally came.

"You—you are out of uniform—ah—Wally," he said, stumblingly. He shoved out the calloused hand which clutched the two shoulder straps. "You forgot these. Put 'em on." He drew a harsh breath of relief. "And now," he shouted hoarsely, "it's your watch on the bridge. Will you get to hell up there where you belong?"

Wally Webster's face was as white as old paper. He looked searchingly into Mike's tired eyes, and then smiled. It was the first time he had ever smiled at Mike. He reached out and gently took the shoulder straps from Mike's big, flat fingers.

"Thank you, sir," he said quietly, and the word "Sir" seemed proper, friendly, the way he said it this time. Deliberately he forgot to salute.

From somewhere in the back of that crowd of milling men came a voice.

"How about a long cheer for Mike?" it crowed.

But Mike's voice bounced from deck to ceiling and back again.

"Belay that!" he thundered. "Don't you swabs know there's a war on?"

Seeing me fall, young Baglione flung himself into my place and led the battle.

GOLD BALL AND CHAIN

By F. R. BUCKLEY

To my Particular Good Lord, My Lord Pietro IV, Duke of Rometia; from Luigi Caradosso, sometime Captain of the Guard, these:

Sire;

The courier will have brought Your Highness my humble felicitations on the birth of Your Grace's heir; to whom God grant long life, good health, a cold heart and a treacherous disposition, to the greater glory of Your Lordship's family and the increase of its dominions, amen!

Aye, at fourscore years of age I have

learned to suit my good wishes to the times.

Whereas (coming to Your Grace's question) I have not learned anything very profitable about fortification; indeed, after fifty years as a horse-soldier I mistrust these machicolations as menaces to my honest trade, and perils to the principle of princedom. Because wars cannot be fought, sire, without the common people; and without drums and trumpets and banners and the flash of armor to amuse them until such time as they're knocked on the head, the common people will not fight.

Shut them up behind barbicans, put up their taxes, cut down their rations, give 'em nothing to look at but wives smashed flat by stones from the mangonels, and they'll be howling for differences to be settled at law, so that doctors may endure the boredom for them.

That would put soldiers out of work, and sire—if law prevailed, how much would be left of the Duchy of Rometia?

Thus I advise Your Grace against tower-building and suchlike.

As for the contrary method (that of attack on possible invaders) I was concerned in the effort of Guido Martini to keep Monterosso forever in the hands of his family—which meant, out of those of the Squarcie.

He was a small noble in the south—a pestilential country of fleas and fevers—and I went to serve him because at the moment I was in disgrace with Your Lordship's grandfather. Nothing very serious—I'd hanged one of His Grace's spies by mistake—but Pietro I was hasty in his temper and so, as I say, I sought other service for the time being.

And what a service it was! A tumbledown castle, half rebuilt, swampy country, troops with the threshing-chaff still in their hair, and his lordship demanding that I ride forth and smash his neighbor ere even I'd taught this yokelry to salute. 'Tis a solemn thought that I might have been slain in such a low brawl, had not God sent my old friend Piero dello Vincolo, the *condottiere* through that countryside. I rode all one night to beg his aid. Probably Your Grace will never have heard of Piero—he was a free-lance of the lesser sort, but at least his men knew their right hands from their left and I had heard it rumoured that of late he had stolen a couple of guns.

He had saved my life once, which made me believe (much more surely than if I had saved his) that he would help me now; and, after some humming and hawing and queries as to who was to pay for the armor his men might get killed inside of, he agreed.

I kissed him, I remember, and he said I might go to hell but that he wished to see if his guns could be used in the field.

"In the field?" says I. "But we are cavalry. How can guns keep up with us?"

"We shall see!" says Piero, grinning and winking. "There is no law yet against a soldier using his wits, my Luigi."

And I am frank to admit that 'twas his wits that let us win that war in a week; he called it a lightning war, did Piero, and said he threw the thunder in for nothing. It will seem foolish to Your Lordship, no doubt; but it was no joke to the enemy cavalry when, for the first time in the history of the world, they were confronted by artillery that could move.

AYE, I can see them now, crowning a hillock and then charging down it in the full confidence that the descent and their greater numbers would give them a shock which we could not match.

Likewise I can see in my mind's eye what happened to their front rank when, at full gallop, Piero put his scheme into execution. Four of our files, two on each flank, swung outward a horse's breadth, disclosing the cannon which were being carried in cradles between horses; the gunners riding the said horses with quick-matches in their hands. Our cavalry and theirs were about twenty lance-lengths from collision; Piero was riding in the van; I saw him raise his arm and heard him shout "Fire!" and—with a dreadful roar those two guns went off.

They had been loaded to the muzzle with stones, Your Highness, and they threw the front rank of the enemy into utter confusion. Horses were down; men

were flung under the feet of horses that were rearing and swerving from the blast and the fire; the second rank was riding into the rear of the first—and then our flying bolt of five hundred men smashed at full speed into the chaos.

NEXT thing to the which was of course the peace conference between the victorious and defeated lords; they met to do their arguing in the great hall at Monterosso, and I remember how hard it was for me (in full armor, and bothered with the flies, and still suffering from a lance-wound in the left foot) to tell them apart.

Both were vast big men with jowls and eyes that glittered with a thin water; both had hands that clutched even as they lay at rest on the table top; and both were widowers, my master having hounded his wife to death for giving him a daughter, and Baglione his for not providing a better son.

'Twas for these children's inheritances they had been fighting, so they said; but mescemed, sire, that it was rather for their own vanity, with the children for stalking horses. My own lord's daughter had been out of his sight for years, being brought up by an aunt at Padua; the son of Girolamo Baglione sat between their worships as they roared at each other, and both of them contemned him.

He was a thoughtful looking youth who said little, and would have done better to say less, in that company. All I recall of his conversation is that during the battle in the vineyard he had been at home reading a book called Plato because how people should be governed was more important than who should govern them.

At which saying his father arose and in a roaring voice conceded the point on which there'd been most argument; namely, whether or not this Jacopo should be held by my master as a hostage. Such holding was considered a smirch to a father's honor, but old Baglione was past that consideration.

"And he's to wear the golden ball?" my master slips into the shouting.

The golden ball was considered more disgraceful still; it hath been out of fashion these many years, but sire, it was a ball and chain like those worn by common folk in dungeons; only made very little, with a chain such as ladies hang their keys on, and a ball that could be tucked into the belt. But it made a man's captivity manifest, and for the moment Baglione boggled at it.

Then he looked at his son, who seemed not in the least perturbed by the proposal and roared that my master could put the lad in chains if he were so minded, or set him to cleaning out the sewers.

"'A's no son of mine!" bellows the father." But mark you, Girolamo Martini, I'll be even with thee yet for this! That land by Aggi hath been mine since 1236—"

"It will be part of my daughter's dowry in 1547," says my master, grinning.

"I'll have it back by then, and that swampland thy father stole from mine!"

My master licked his lips lingeringly and put the tips of his fingers together.

"Not so, I think. I am marrying my daughter to Andrea Sforza; and the Sforzas, albeit but of Empoli, are not kindly toward such as would filch their marriage portions. Nine hundred men my lord of Empoli keeps under arms; I think it is nine hundred. Well, this is his son."

Baglione licked his lips.

"To marry Sforzas is easier said than done," says he.

"Not by me," says my master, rising. "My daughter comes home tomorrow; young Sforza comes the day after; and when I've shown him how a county should be governed so that it may prosper and increase in size—"

"By theft and murder, if the example of your lordship's sire is to be followed."

"Possibly," says my master, smiling, "but the lands will bear crops just the same."

"Aye. Well, speaking of crops," says Baglione," at least thy father was man enough to beget a son—of a kind."

Sire, as men of the world you and I know that daughters are accidents that may befall any man; how many, for instance, have I myself? Who knows? But behold, in an instant his noble lord-

ship of Monterosso was on his feet, tugging at his dagger, and on the other side of the table this grave Baglione was foining to impale him on a knife he had drawn theretofore, and I had the devil's own time to get between their graces; and Baglione's captain (that was not in armor, being defeated) got a nasty cut in the shoulder.

Their lordships frothed; and Messer Baglione thereafter took his departure, shouting threats back over his shoulder very much in the manner of a porter who has not been paid enough.

THERE was a great deal of confusion that eventide, because both my lord's daughter and her bridegroom-to-be arrived ere they were expected—the one at about twenty o'clock, in a litter, and the other as night was falling, very high-bred looking on a white horse; I turned out the guard for them twice, swearing under my breath, and it was late in the evening before I could escort Jacopo Baglione to the armorer's shop to be fitted with his ball and chain. 'Twas not to be riveted on, as such things are when meant seriously; it had a lock and the young gentleman could have put it on for himself, or I for him; but armorers are a craft and jealous of their privileges, and so we had to traipse all down the south battlements and past the bailie to the little shop over the stables.

And when we got there, who should be before us and in converse with the old weapon-smith but this Margherita, my lord's daughter.

"Ah. Well, now trot along and talk to thy bridegroom," says the old man, getting up. "I've work to do. Put thy leg up on the anvil, young gentleman."

"What's this?" asks the girl.

"Your servant, lady," says the young man. "Our fathers mistrust each the other, and I am to be held as hostage that my sire steals no land from thine. There are so many dead men in the fields this week past that the land is very rich and valuable."

The old armorer gave a chuckle and snapped the lock. The ball and chain were not really gold, of course, only brass. Jacopo took his foot off the anvil, looped the chain, and stuck the ball in his waistbelt.

The girl was looking out of the door of the armorer's shop, and I followed her gaze. There, in a sort of enclosed garden there was, walked her father and this Andrea Sforza, pointing hither and yon and making architectural gestures.

"That'll be next to go," says the armorer. "Last bit o' green there is left, ladyship. His grace was talking of lopping the magnolia to make a catapult platform, long since."

"That seems a pity," says Jacopo Baglione; and the girl looked at him.

"'Tis all like that," she said. "When I was a little girl there were courtyards everywhere, with trees and fountains in them, and I used to plant flowers with my mother and watch them grow. Now I come back and there's naught but stones—and guns—and soldiers."

She now looked at me, but otherwise than she had surveyed the young prisoner; I had a beard, you see, and a grey one at that, and already some two or three of those scars which make my countenance so unexpected. So methought it was time to salute and go to my quarters.

Which I did, there finding my lieutenant—an excellent good fellow for a Sicilian—stamping up and down, in wrathful temper, indeed, and swearing he would leave the service.

"Yon puppy of a Sforza!" says he to my query; upon which I closed the windows and the doors. He had served with Giovanni delle Bande Nere, this man, and was my only reliance among the plough-hands that made up the guard; so I did not want him hung up among the wedding decorations.

His grievance was not so much, after all; only that while he was commanding the guard at dinner time, which is the office of the lieutenant, young Sforza had said he would shoot pigeons the next morning, and told Guido to have a gun ready for him.

"Well," says I," thou'd but to give the order—"

"But he told *me* to do it!" says Guido, clutching his bosom with both hands. "Me—twelve times wounded; moreover I was with Giovanni at—"

"Customs differ in the north," says I.

"He's not from the north! If he knew no better, I'd pardon him; but he doth —and when he went out of the hall he brushed Gianpagolo Vitelli that was on guard and made him drop his halberd and then cursed him for a clumsy fool."

"Mm," say I, because as your Grace knows, there are young noblemen of that stripe, and naught to be done about them. Unless perchance they take the fancy to lead some charge or other; when their horses may stumble, and the files fail to open out in time. . . .

I said something of this sort to Guido, but he was set in his purpose.

"Thou'll never find that lout in action," says he. "And he might brush against me and curse me, so I think I'll take my pay and go, Luigi, and God pity the poor young lady that's to marry him, say I."

But I persuaded him. He thanked me after.

AND the next day I had a murder to prevent; and the day after that there came news that Buffo Elfano, the bandit, was within my lord's territories again. How I cursed the day ever I'd hanged that spy up north without more care!

All started so peacefully, too; it was a fine morning; I was sitting in the doorway of my quarters on the south wall—overlooking this little green courtyard they were to fortify—and watching my lord's daughter and this Jacopo Baglione walking about together. Whiles they would stop, and the girl would pull out a little silk bag from her girdle and kneel down and poke something into the earth with her fingers; then she would pat the place and rise, he giving her his hand, and they would walk on somewhere else and do the same.

She was planting a garden, bless her innocent heart, regardless of the fact that stonemasons would be rooting all up before any seed had a chance to sprout; and it was obvious that young Baglione was in one mind with her. Beyond hoping that my lord would not take this amiss and order the young man strangled or the like, it was however none of my concern; so I pulled at my flagon with my feet on the doorsill and enjoyed the prospect. Very pretty and springlike it was, with those twain walking about in the shadow speckles, and the pigeons flying about overhead.

And then all of a sudden there was a great bang and one of the birds in mid-air flies into a cloud of feathers, as it were, and comes down all spread-eagled at the lady's feet.

She stood there amazed for a moment, and then her hand drooped so that the little silk bag of seeds dropped on the ground, and then she drooped so that Jacopo Baglione had to catch her; and she hung there on him in a swound, with her head on his shoulder, just as milord Sforza came out of the arcade with a grin on his face and the smoking gun in his hand.

The grin very quickly disappeared when he saw where was the lady; he forgot about the pigeon too, that was bleeding to death through its beak on the flagstones, and going roughly up to Jacopo demanded that he unhand madonna.

Such was his tone, and such the flushing of his countenance (he was of a red, land-owning face much like milords Guido and Girolamo) that I put down my flagon, hitched my thumbs in my waistbelt and strolled to the head of the stairs lest a brawl be toward.

"If I loose her, she will fall," says Jacopo, upon which Sforza said an oath and reached to tear the senseless girl bodily away.

Now Jacopo's flat hand, pushed forth with astonishing strength, it seemed to me, stuck his young lordship on the breast and held him off.

"Fetch her women," says he; at which moment behold one of the said women came fluttering out of the arcade to one side, making small screams as she saw her mistress' plight; while from the opposite direction walking high and disposedly with his hands clutching the borders of his robe, came her father.

"What's this?" he asked in his heavy voice.

"I came into the garden and found this fellow with madonna in his arms," says Sforza.

"She fainted," says Baglione, handing the girl over carefully to her maid,

"when this—gentleman—shot the pigeon. She hath not developed a proper taste for blood."

Margherita had come to herself by this time, and was being led away. She gave a frightened look at her father and at Sforza, and a smile to Jacopo Baglione, which her father noted.

"I had believed thee a prisoner here," says he in a growl.

Jacopo bowed and looked down at his ball and chain.

"So I am."

"A hostage, son of a man that could not defend his lands—a weakling. Is't not so?"

Jacopo shrugged; I thought, from where I was, I could see a flush on his cheekbones, but I could not be sure.

"Then beware of thy state," roars milord," and keep hands off my daughter. Understand?"

Young Baglione said nothing; just stood there.

"Or I'll take measures with thee, master prisoner," says milord. He stood at gaze a moment more, then put his arm round the shoulders of Sforza (who had stood there grinning all the time) and walked back into the loggia.

I watched with some interest to see what Jacopo would do; but he did naught, just stood there looking down at the dead pigeon and the little silk bag that had held the seeds; so I went back to my seat and my flagon of wine, and was feeling much happier an hour later when this Margherita must come fluttering in and make me wipe my mouth and stand to attention.

"Captain," says she," thou'st a kind heart—I know it. Look you—there is a plot toward—I was outside the door of my father's cabinet—"

Along the battlements there sounded approaching feet; I knew what that would be; had dreaded it all day; the order to go forth and deal with this brigand Elfano. Hottest time of the year, too.

And sure enough, in the doorway appeared one of the sentries, and saluted.

"Captain to his lordship, at once," says he.

"Dismissed!" says I; and started to reach for my half-armor; because in those days when lordships said at once they meant it—and in proper ceremonial trim, too.

But Margherita clung to my arm.

"Lady," says I, "I cannot stay. As for a kind heart, I've not had one since 1532."

It does not matter what happened in 1532, Your Grace; someone died—and no one cared but me. However, her young ladyship seemed affected even now; her eyes softened and she said, looking at me with womanly sympathy:

"Alas, poor man! God help thee!"

—and let go of my sleeve and stood abashed; so I put on my helmet and took leave to pat her on the shoulder and said I would do what I could; and she said:

"Let—*him* not—be killed—"

And then I hastened to his lordship.

IT WAS not long before I saw what she had meant, because after giving me my orders to go forth and ride down this Elfano, milord, with young Sforza at his elbow, pulled the feathers off a pen and said:

"Sith we are somewhat charged with the welfare of our guest Messer Baglione, captain, I think it would be as well to let him see that governing a duchy is not all a matter of reading Plato while better men fight."

"Plato!" says young Sforza, throwing himself back in his chair. "Readeth, eh! Ha ha!"

" 'Myes. Wherefore, captain, I would have Messer of Jacopo ride along with you tomorrow—just to see how these things are done. After all, his father hath some lands left, and he may have to govern them some day."

"If there are any lands left by then," says Sforza. "I hope for a family."

"Hah. So let Ser Jacopo go with thee," says milord. "But of course as a prisoner he will bear no weapons. That is to be understood. I trust it *is* understood. Is it?"

I was to take the boy out and get him killed, in fine. Aye, I understood that. But it was not a matter to which I felt inclined to say yea or nay, so I saluted.

"Dismissed," says his lordship with a

distrustful, hanging sort of look. "And be speedy, captain."

So we rode forth the morrow's morn, main few of us for the task in hand, and young Jacopo to my right where my lieutenant should have been. Milord had called me back and said that he feared a surprise attack by Ser Baglione, and that he must keep Bertuccio and half the men at home. I tried to tell him this was vanity, but he would not hear. Indeed, as the day wore on, and the prospect of our departure grew closer, he became more and more dubious about letting us go at all, and was only forced to do so because Elfano was raiding crops he needed to pay for his new fortifications.

By four o'clock of the evening, when young Sforza had got stupid drunk, His Grace was in fact uneasy to the point of telling me almost the truth.

"Let not this youth sit somewhere under a tree while thy men do the fighting," says he. "Let him see bloodshed close to, seest thou."

"Is he to have armor?" I asked.

Milord hesitated, but a naked corpse would have looked bad.

"Certainly!" says he therefore. "Dost think I want the milksop slain? But I'll have none of that family taking my lands from me, mark you. I'll have no Baglione lord over any acre of mine!"

"Is the other young gentleman to come with us, also?" I asked; and my lord glowered at me and young Sforza gave a shout of laughter and they both shook their heads.

So we rode out and (to make a long story short, because I am writing of how to preserve duchies in families, and not of the art of bandit hunting) we brought Buffo Elfano to a stand near Fontezzana, on the road to Rome. I say we brought him to a stand because I have spent fifty years making reports to my own advantage, and the habit is hard to break. Actually, one of my scouts came on him pillaging a village, and he captured the scout and cut one of his ears off and sent him back to say he was there, and there he would stay, and that if I wished to come on and be annihilated, I should be welcome. He was a notable bandit, this Buffo Elfano; worked by ruining countrysides and then inviting the menfolk to join him instead of starving to death. Thus he had got together a force much larger than mine, and hardly worse disciplined.

According to the first scout and others I sent out with adjurations to be careful of their ears; this rogue was in fact proposing to give us a regular battle; which I explained to Jacopo Baglione.

"Fighting not being to thy taste," says I," it would be as well, perhaps—"

"Fighting not to my taste?" says he. "Who said so?"

"Well, your honour did," says I. "Staying at home with yon book while your father—"

"That was a quarrel as to who should own lands, and not worth fighting for," says he. "This Elfano, as I take it, is a murderer and a thief and a foe of law and order. Eh?"

"Why, yes," said I, never having thought much about it. A soldier fights whom he's told to fight without worrying about rights and wrongs; what the devil!

"Then I ride with thee," says Jacopo, "and I pray you give me a sword, captain."

"Well, as to that—" says I—and without too much plain speaking put the state of the case before him. We had had some conversation together during the past two days, and I liked the lad; moreover, the evening before we rode out, I had caught a glimpse of him under the window of Madonna Margherita, talking to her as a young man should, in the moonlight, while her appointed bridegroom fuddled himself with her father and with rolls upon rolls of plans for more fortifications. There was a flowering vine that climbed the wall to the young lady's window, and as I was closing my door for the night, I saw her pick a bloom off it and throw it to young Baglione. It was all quite useless, of course, but I did not want to see him killed.

"Wherefore there will be no dishonor in your worship's getting off in this village and sitting over a bucket of wine while we deal with these rogues," says I.

"I disagree," says the young gentleman gravely; at the same time disengaging his shackle from his waistbelt.

" 'Tis the duty of an honest man to ride against rogues."

"But without arms!" says I.

"That is the responsibility of my lord Guido," says he. "I can but do what seems right to me. If I am to be killed, that is my destiny. But I shall take means to avoid it."

And oons! Your Grace, he took means indeed!

I WILL be plain and brief again; first because I am still writing about how to keep duchies in families, and secondly because at the very onset of the battle some lout with an axe smote me between the neckbone and the shoulder while a footman piked my horse; so that I was stunned, cut, thrown and rolled upon and lay unconscious for the better part of the fight.

May it be believed that, seeing me fall, young Baglione flung himself into my place and led the battle!

With what weapon?

Why, with that ball and chain he wore; waking up and sitting up, feeling very sick and uncertain of my eyesight, I saw him at work with it. He had one leg cocked up on his saddle to give him use of the full length of chain; his helmet was knocked off and his hair flying, he was laughing like a madman and spurring hither and yon and everlastingly laying about him with the ball.

Various of my men were riding about with their swords dripping, but they also had grins on their faces, a good sign; and when at last one found time to stop and ask me was I hurt—the fool!—he said that the antics of his young lordship had put two hearts into every man.

"There's a young devil for you, Captain," says he. "Laid Buffo Elfano out himself, in the first ten minutes."

"Killed him?" says I.

"Near enough," says the man, preparing to remount. "There he lies, Captain, within two ells of you. Coming, my lord!"

With a yell he was off; so I dragged myself over to where Buffo Elfano lay, stuck a finger in his eye and found he was still living; and seated myself comfortably on his chest for the rest of the fight. It was moving away from that spot; and as my vision cleared I saw that young Baglione and my—his—men were herding the bandits merrily into the Picchio River.

We ended the day with Buffo Elfano hanged, his two lieutenants killed in action, most of his regular troops likewise killed in action or else drowned in the river—and no prisoners.

"But these levies of his," says I, coming to, out of a small faintness that had overtaken me.

"I called on them to throw down their arms, after Buffo had fallen," says Jacopo," and they did so, and now they've gone back to their farms and so on."

"Thou'll take the blame for that," says I. "His lordship will be mad at having no one to hang. Shouldst have thrown water on me, sir."

"Not so," says the boy. "Look you, Luigi. If I have done thee some small service, repay me by saying naught of this. I was to be unarmed—"

"Ha!" says I, because that brazen flail of his had done more damage than a dozen swords.

"—and unarmed I was. I would not have her young ladyship think of me as a man of violence."

I permitted myself to look sidewise at him and shake my head.

"I know!" says young Baglione. "She's to be wed to that Sforza, if God wills."

He looked at me sidewise now.

"But not otherwise," says he.

SO I said nothing, and took all his lordship's later grumblings to myself (merely resolving to quit his service with a wanion as soon as your Grace's father should be in better temper); and so I was present at a sort of betrothal dinner for Margherita and this Sforza fellow that was given some evenings later.

I was present because the young lady has come to me and begged me to order my lieutenant to be sick; she mistrusted what might be toward at this supper.

"*He* and my father have been muttering and drinking together all day," says she, "and I fear he may pick a quarrel with Jacopo, and he's so gentle—"

"Is that why your ladyship likes him so much—because he's so gentle?" says I.

She nodded at me, with her hands wrung together and her eyes full of tears. And I thought—having given no promise of secrecy—that I would be cruel to be kind.

"Then I think your ladyship should know," says I, "that this gentle young man is one of the bloodiest fighters ever I saw. It came about thus—"

And of course I told her all about the business of Buffo Elfano, putting in a great deal out of mine own imagination; in fact representing young Messer Jacopo as having been gore from head to foot, and still swinging his ball and chain on top of a mountain of cracked skulls.

In the midst of which, I perceived that the young lady's eyes were glowing, and that her hands were wrung together harder than ever; and stopped short.

"How wonderful!" says she in a whisper. "Yes—I always thought he was like that; brave and strong—"

There was nothing to be done; if she loved young Baglione so much, and was to marry a lout like this Sforza, the least I could do was spare her the sight of her lover spitted; they could poison him later, or push him off the battlements to suit themselves. So there I was at the supper, dull enough meal to start with, during which I looked through various windows of the hall and marvelled at the pains my lord had been at to protect his little holdings.

Sir, there was no pleasure in that castle any more. Out of the north window (and there were hills to the north) one could see only crenellations and the backsides of guns. To the south and east, where there had been a sort of loggia, towers had been built, all nasty new stonework, obscuring all but a glimpse of the sky; and the windows to the west, which would have given on that little garden still remaining, were all crisscrossed with the scaffolding the masons had put up that very day. I had my back to the west, where the sun was setting in a blaze of glory.

I was pondering various matters when suddenly the young lady's voice cut across the respectful distance at which I held myself, with the sharp exclamation: "No!"

This awoke me, because in those days young ladies were not expected to say "No" to their fathers; times are changed now, but thenadays it was unusual, and moreover she shouted it.

I saw milord, who had flung himself back in his chair, gather himself together like a cat about to spring. So did young Baglione. The Sforza youth paid little heed, being rather too drunk.

"I said," says my lord, that the wedding shall be Tuesday. What means this 'Nay?' to me?"

Madonna Margherita got up.

"It means that I'll not marry that drunken hulk—Tuesday or any other day of the year, says she, sort of breathless.

Her father's face began to grow red. Moreover his eyes shuttled.

"Look at him!" criès the girl, pointing to Sforza. He gave a hunch in his chair and smiled foolishly. "A rotten branch of a family of robbers; a cruel, gun-shooting brute—"

My lord arose in his place.

"So," says he; and I thought he would have roared, but his voice was thick and he clawed at his throat. "So. I know. So."

Suddenly his voice cleared.

"Guard!" he shouted; so I stepped forward and saluted.

He now spoke to his daughter again.

"I am aware," says he, "and pointed a shaking finger at young Baglione," this this caterwauling milksop has taken thine eye. After all I've done to keep thy heritage—"

"What do I want of guns and battlements?" says she.

"But I'll take order with thee, miss," says her father. "Captain! Arrest him; take him to the dungeons."

Jacopo stood up and I watched him lest he loose that ball and chain again.

"I was not to be imprisoned, sir," says he; but my lord was past remembrance of treaties. His eyes were starting out of his head and his face was turning purple with rage.

"Arrest him!" he shouts; and of course I stepped forward to obey orders. I have always obeyed orders to the best of my

ability; God help me—and pardon those that gave 'em.

But I was not to obey this one.

For behold, there was a flutter of silks and my lady was before me, and with a dagger in her hand too.

"Lay a finger on him, Luigi Cardosso," says she, "and I stab thee. Stand back!"

Of course she could have stabbed at me all day and been welcome, a pretty poppet; but before taking her wrist or the like of that, I looked at his lordship for instructions and behold, sir, he was choking for air. Yes, it was as though all the towers he'd built around him had cut off his breathing; or as though (according to my new lieutenant when we talked it over) the finger of God had reached in past all his fortifications and touched him on the brain. Because in that instant he gave a cry and fell; and though he lived a many years thereafter, he never spoke again, sire, nor had the use of his right side.

THE girl and young Baglione and I picked him up, and his eyes were red in the whites and had no sense in them; we carried him away to his bed, while young Sforza that all the coil had been about laid his head on the table and went fast asleep; and when we had seen the old man comfortably bestowed, we came back to the great hall and Madonna Margherita pointed at Sforza.

"When he has slept himself sober, turn him out of here," says she. "I give him into thy charge, Captain."

"If I might delegate the duty to my lieutenant—" says I, and she looked at me and laughed.

"Take him away now, at all events," says she; and so I hoisted his young lordship over my shoulder like a sack of coals and delivered him to Bertuccio, who was main glad to see him.

I went back to report and found Madonna Margherita and young Jacopo in each other's arms, by the great window that looked on the setting sun.

So she was married on the Tuesday after all; by my lord's own chaplain; and I suppose there is scarce anyone thereabouts who can now remember that the Martini and Baglione lordships were not always one, or could believe (except a few old men with wounds that ache in the spring time) that ever there were bloody wars between the peoples.

Which state of affairs, I bethink me, is what Your Grace wishes at all costs to avoid; and hath done me the honor of asking how such a calamity may be prevented.

Well, sire, as I have shown, cavalry is unreliable to such an end; much more fortifications with their other disadvantages as noted.

If Your Grace is still resolute to settle the future rulership of Rometia without possibility of error, I would advise that henceforth within the boundaries of the duchy the moon be forbidden to shine; that birds be prohibited from singing, trees from bearing flowers; and that the stars, the breezes, the sunshine, the springtime and the coursing of the blood be prevented from having the effect they have hitherto had on young men and maidens.

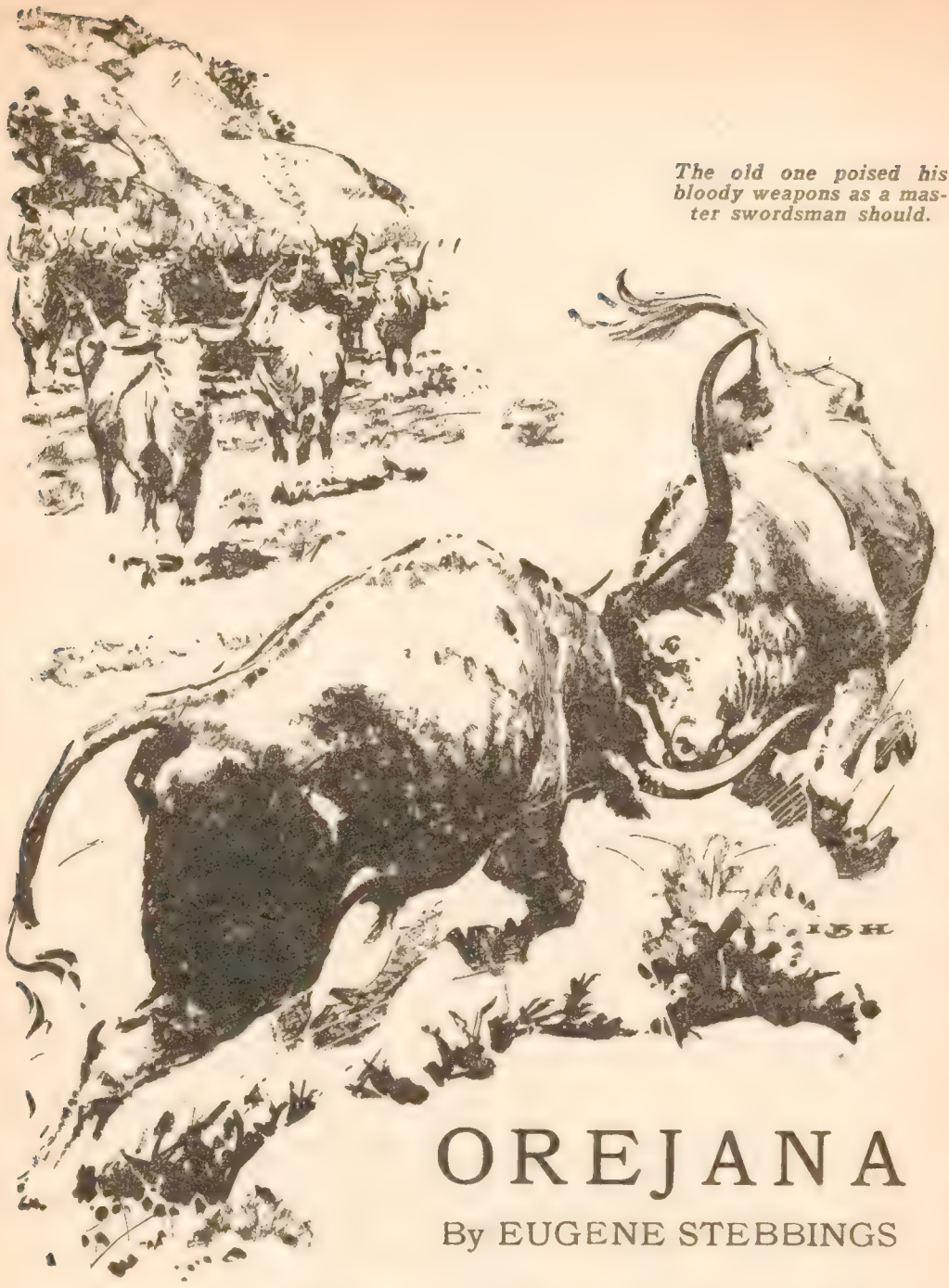
A task which may be within the powers of Your Lordship' high and mightiness.

But which
Is quite beyond
Your Grace's Humble and
Approved Good Servant
L. Caradosso.
Captain

TEHANNERS

By S. OMAR BARKER

Up the trails they came from Texas, with their herds of mossy horns,
Their blood still full of ague an' their hides still full of thorns,
From far off *ramaderos* where the Nueces skirts the Brush,
To the green hills of Wyoming where the cricks from snowbanks gush,
A-ridin' Texas ponies not much bigger than a rat,
As g'ant as gutted snowbirds by the time they hit the Platte.
The men looked lean an' hungry like Tehanners mostly do,
An' they rode hoss-eatin' saddles that you'd swear was hungry, too.
If you took their invitation to the wagon, there you learnt
That the grub they et was soggy an' the biscuits always burnt.
Their clothes was rough ol' homespun an' their hats was weathered out;
Their knee-high boots was patched with whang, their coffee over-stout.
Their wagon tarp was saggy, all bestreaked with rain an' dust;
Their talk was slow an' draggy, like a door that drawls with rust.
They run a heap to whiskers with a plumb discouraged droop,
An' some, they set their saddles with a holler-chested stoop
That made you kinder wonder, from a northern cowboy's view,
How such a sorry oufit ever brung them cattle through.
Yet up the trails from Texas ever' year they'd come again,
Them ratty Texas ponies an' them hungry Texas men,
With herds that numbered thousands, yet had never lost a cow,
In spite of flooded crossings, of stampedes an' soggy chow!
For sorry lookin' outfits you would hit it on the nail
To name them g'ant Tehanners at the top end of the trail;
But if I tell it honest, as I dang sure aim to do,
Theirs was the breed of hoss an' man to bring the cattle through.
An' if I tell it faithful to the truth, right up to taw,
Them was the greatest cowhands that the world has ever saw!



The old one poised his bloody weapons as a master swordsman should.

OREJANA

By EUGENE STEBBINGS

A PAIR of lobos stopped their hunting lope as at a shot. Their gaunt, gray bodies stiffened. Only pricked up, quivering ears showed evidence of life. Those delicate receiving sets were tuned to utmost range. To human ears, a death-like silence reigned upon the sterile hills. Yet, within the lobos' sensitive brains, a message was recorded, read. The pricked ears drooped; the lobos breathed again. Two grim heads turned to face; two pairs of yellow eyes shot questions, answers. The hunt was there abandoned. The lobos turned back on their trail.

A night cloud, bedded on the wild

foothills, moved restlessly, awoke, and donned a shroud of ghostly gray. It drained a golden beaker of sun wine. It danced and flung its skirts about. Its cheeks blushed red with new-born life. Recklessly it sprang and dashed against the saw-toothed mountain tops. The white fangs tore it into tattered shreds and sent the pieces fluttering on the morning breeze.

An eagle, perched high above his mate's crude nest, looked down and took shrewd note of all that moved below. He saw the lobos moving swiftly through the rocks. He wondered: only a moment had passed since they had trailed a deer toward the distant, rolling plains. And now they had turned back, were traveling at top speed, running upon a line as straight as they could find toward a rift that split the mountain wall.

The eagle glanced down on his nesting mate. He seemed to say: "Stay where you are! Something is happening. I must go and see! The lobos scent fresh meat!" Spreading his wings, he launched into the lazy night still sleeping on the mountains' western side. Downward he sailed, then zoomed to a great height and set his course to match the lobos' flight.

But now the mountains and the hills awoke to high alarm. From here and there and everywhere went beasts and birds, all hurrying and scurrying. On padded paws, on horny hoofs, on flashing wings, they went; all headed to the rift for which the lobos were the first to start. They knew what hid there from the eyes of cruel men. They knew a mountain-meadow paradise where kingly beasts had made a home.

And as they went the multitude called to each other in the manner of their kind. A "mountain-man" could easily interpret their cries: "The great ones! The long-horns! They quarrel! They fight! They fight! Something to see—to see—to see!" And now the walls sent mocking echoes back. "A fight! A fight—a fight! Hurry! Hurry!—hurry. There may be something to eat! To eat! To e-e-a-a-t."

From out the rift there rolled a rumbling as of distant thunder. The timid of the multitude hung back, but soon curiosity or hunger drove them on. As they came nearer to the awe-inspiring sounds, the thunder turned to voices, voices of angry Titans roaring challenges and threats. And one great voice arose above it all. Its bellows of defiance rocked the mountain walls. It set the fiercer wild things mad and each, in his weird tongue, gave vent to high emotion.

THE lobos and the eagle were first to come upon a battle scene. The lobos looked down from the brink of sheer, bare canyon walls, the eagle from his soaring height. Before the lobos, and to each side, there yawned a wide, deep slash. It started where a narrow crack split dizzy pinnacles apart. It broadened to a width of half a mile, extending, slightly downward, to a distance twice its breadth. At lower end, its forming cataclysm had flung its debris in a pile. It lay there, rounded, rough and long, sparsely grown with brush and stunted, wind-whipped trees, a "hogback" hill which snuggled, close, between the waning canyon walls, impassable save over rounded front and rock-strewn top. It barred the canyon's outlet to the north.

Erosions of perhaps ten thousand years had lodged within the huge earth-crack to form a nearly level floor, a floor at least a thousand feet below the brink on which the lobos watched. And on the floor had sprung a lush-grassed meadow, watered, near its center, by a shallow, reedy pond. Nature had formed a giant's amphitheatre on which a drama of the wild was being staged. No human actors graced its boards. The lobos saw the play was on.

A herd, five hundred head of long-horned cattle, wild and unbranded, formed the body of the troop. They milled, but always with a semblance of order in their ranks. Ten rods apart from them, his lowered head directed at the rest, stood a huge bull. And from his cavernous maw there came defiant roars. Gobbets of dust shot up beneath his hairs. He pawed the sandy soil and flung the grass roots back. He knelt on one, round, calloused knee and plowed the sod with lance-like horns. And, though he faced five hundred pairs of

threatening horns, the audience marked that he showed no trace of fear.

Wild warriors themselves, the audience cheered him with their own weird battle cries. They understood the plots of wild life plays. Plays that never were rehearsed. Plays which are grim life itself. This one, a cruel tragedy, known well to ruthless men and beasts. Its plot, the casting out or killing of the aged, wounded, sterile and unliked. This was the making of an "orejana," an outlaw of the cattle-kind. The victim knew the import of the bellowed threats. He understood his plight. Yet he who'd led the others out of bondage, a very Moses of his kind, chose to die fighting rather than to wander lonely ranges by himself.

Act I had passed. The lobos had been right—blood had been let! A dozen yards in front of the lone bull, the mangled carcass of another bull now lay. Act II had just begun. Suddenly the lone bull left his plowing of the turf. Straightening his huge form, he arched his tasseled tail and lifted high his massive head. He changed the tenor of his trumpeting. It voiced command. He ordered that the herd disperse and turn to grazing peacefully. Even the dullest of his listeners understood. A hush fell upon the motley audience. "Was the show so soon to end? Their truce would end too suddenly. There'd not be half enough for all to eat." The weaker ones cringed farther back. The cloven-hoofs turned round for rapid flight. Only the black lips of the lobos slavered at the thought. Buzzards circled lower, yet wary of the eagle, who knew that he'd be first to eat.

Within the front ranks of the herd, there ranged a ragged line of full-grown bulls, at least a score of them. They answered the command by bawling lustily, yet each was secretly afraid to meet the challenger alone. Though each was jealous of the others, each hating all of his own sex; each feared and hated his old sire more. Have men yet gained the right to scoff?

MASSED closely and still farther back, blatted a squad of younger bulls, bulls that had not gained as many as two wrinkles on their pearly horns. Crowding them closely, surged a mass of bawling cows. Few cows showed signs of coming motherhood. Far back, a few excited mothers ran crazily about, torn to their utmost between desire to act and filial duty to their new-born calves. Instinctive mass-revolt burned in the feeble minds, and reek of blood had frenzied them.

The action on the mountain-meadow stage now dragged a pace, dragged while five hundred mustered courage equal to the one. The old king waited, grew impatient. Again he shook his lance-like, forward-pointing horns and roared. The morning sun found way between two mountain peaks to stare down on the startling scene. It did the ancient warrior an ill turn. It played its dazzling light upon white hairs that roaned his once red coat. For the first time he looked his real age.

A brindle bull was tempted by the sign of weakening age to pit his untouched strength against the ancient one. Snorting, he forged forward from the battle front. And he was taller than the hoary one and longer by a full three span. But what he gained in height and length he lost, and over, by his narrowness. His horns spread seven feet from tip to tip, but pointed to each side. The old bull backed to gain more charging space. The brindle, now, came swiftly on. The old one stopped and braced his hind legs back. He poised his bloody weapons as a master swordsman should. He made no move to charge. The brindle's charge was lumbering, awkward, as he threshed his horns from side to side. No master of fence was he. A stray of recent coming, his veins carried not a vestige of the blood of the old king.

Their enmity seemed in better case because of it.

Their meeting impact was not very heavy after all. The old bull lanced a stupid, bulging eye. His left horn slithered downward, tore the brindle's jugular vein. He pushed the fighting fool aside and let him fall to wallow in his blood and, kicking, die. Quickly the master backed again to give himself more fighting room. Hardly had he gained a standing place when three bulls

charged him at an angle, from one side. Theirs was poor generalship indeed. A black bull quickly gained a length. Behind him came a "calico", close followed by a white.

Strength and courage are things admired by all, but skillful fighting requires vastly more. A champion warrior must bring art and science to his aid. With all, he often overcomes what seem great handicaps. The unskilled bull sights, once, his enemy, then charges, blindly, to that mark. The old bull waited till the three were settled to their line of charge then trotted, straight ahead, four lengths. Then, with a snort, he charged with all his power and speed. He caught the black one quarteringly and lanced him to his own head-hilt. The impact threw the black bull on his side. The following pair barged over him and fell. Their master gored them as they threshed and bawled. He cut his duels very short, but, even so, they took some toll. He turned to view his herd and found them slowly coming on, in solid ranks.

THE old one's sides were heaving as he trotted on again. This time he did not stop until he'd gained a score of rods. These tactics shifted, steadily, the point of action on the meadow stage. From near the center, it had moved near to the outer end. The old bull's back was almost to the blocking hill. The lobos on the canyon's brink had kept abreast of him, slashing at other watchers who might bar their way. They seemed to glory in the old one's mastery. His skill, his trickery, his intellect was equal to their own. But, closer to him now, they saw that he'd not come through unscathed. Blood tricked from a dozen minor wounds. Yet, as the long rank of the herd came on, he challenged loudly, time and time again.

The herd came on, slowly, relentlessly, but never did it stop again. No reckless heroes broke its close-packed ranks, though, in the foremost rank and nearest to him, a dozen of the strongest bulls had formed, forgetting for the time their individual hates. The old king spread his trembling legs to brace for his last stand. Air whistled as he gulped it to his leathery lungs. His great heart throbbed; salt tears and blood drooled from his battered eyes. His rough tongue licked it from his clogging nares.

The herd came on. Defiantly he dropped his head to bring his lances to a levelled rest. The forward rank of bulls were scarce two lengths from him, but now he saw a thing which heartened him. The bulls were frightened; they were tossing up their heads! None cared to meet him horn to horn. A pair whom fate decreed to meet him face to face had faltered in their stride. Vainly they tried to stem the power of the driving mass behind.

None bellowed, now. Even the little calves, trailing far behind the herd, ran silently. Only the clack of interfering horns and hoofs made up a steady snarling roll, the snare-drums of their battle ranks. The lobos leaned far out upon the canyon's brink and tongued their killing cry. The eagle shot down from the sky and screamed above the shoving backs. All sensed the ending of the fight.

The bulls about to bear the battle's brunt lost heart. Blindly they reared and flung themselves aside. They stumbled as they swerved and fell. Their bodies formed a barrier at which their crowders had to halt. The vanguard of the herd was split. The old king roared and thought to charge straight through. He crouched to make a savage bound, but only silly cows confronted him. And even as he stared at them they closed the narrow gap.

With a bellow that bespoke a vast disgust the grizzled warrior turned. He would not fight with cows! Nor did he deign to hurry when he felt their urging horns. Slowly, deliberately, up the steeply rounded hill he stalked, baffled, in a way defeated, but still proud. Not once did he look back. His temper was not cooled; he scorned the easier, crooked paths which laced the hogback's inward side. He crashed the brashy, stunted pines; he bent the sweeping junipers beneath his ponderous weight. Up, up and on he drove, into the startled quaking aspens. They shrank and shivered as he forced his aching body through or over them. On to the top, the wind-swept top

where only coarsest grasses found precarious holds amid the leached-out jumble of the loose-piled rocks.

At length he gained the high hill's brow and there he turned. With head held high, he gazed through blearing eyes down on his cruel flock, down on the soft green carpet of the mountain-meadow stage. He watched the antics of the battle-locoed herd. The young bulls tromped and gored the bodies of their fallen mates as though *they* had been the villains of the piece. The cows sniffed madly at the blood-smeared grass. The wobbly calves ran frantically to find and hold their places by their mothers' sides. Dimly he saw the lobos seek a safe way down; behind them came a multitude of other hungry things. Not one of all those selfish ones looked up at him.

The fire of wrath that burned within his brain died, slowly, to an ember—then went out. His grayed head drooped; he felt alone, a thing apart from others of his kind. Lower still his great head sank; his strained back sagged. His arched tail dropped and cringed between his hip-shot rumps. His blood dripped slowly from his battered head and from the new-made wounds which crossed old scaly scars. A rusty cowbird came and snapped at big, blue-flies. The hard, white sun came out from hiding near a mountain peak and dried to blackness blood that matted his grayed hairs.

The herd below him quieted, and grazed not far from where the lobos snarled and fought. At length he seemed to waken from a horrid dream. He stretched his shaggy neck. He opened wide his jaws until his black tongue quivered, a huge reed. He sent three mournful bellows wailing through the mountain wilds. No note of challenge in those long-drawn, giant sighs. No hint of harsh defiance in their trailing treble bars. The last note dwindled in its carrying power. Even the echoes did not answer it.

The dethroned king now turned his ears, wide open, to the front. He listened, hopeful of one sympathetic cry, but only a lost, bewildered, little calf gave tongue. He snorted as he turned away, a curious, surly sound, one common to all locoed, dangerous orejanas. That night he bedded all alone, an outcast king, his bed the hard rocks of the hill, where only pungent odors of the poison-hemlocks were wafted to him by the stark night wind.

A WEEK crept slowly by; perhaps it seemed a century to the lonely orejana. Always he kept to the confines of the rugged hill. Within dense shade or deep between tall rocks he found small pockets of hard crystals that had once been white and downy flakes of snow. They, too, had changed since glorious days of romping youth. He licked them for such moisture as they had. As yet, the hill bore only last year's grass and bitter, thorny, newly-budding brush. His paunch grew gaunt; a cloudy film veiled his sinking eyes. Yet, when fierce eyes glared at him from out the darkest shadows of a night, they came no closer. And, when the long, sharp, forward pointing horns swung slowly round their way, the glaring eyes withdrew. To all wild creatures, save those of his own kind, the orejana was still a mighty warrior and a kingly king.

At noon, each day, he sauntered to the meadow side of his long hill. And while the sun rode high he stood there looking down. The grass was taller, now; a few more calves had come. Always, three times, he bellowed long, inquiringly. He seemed to ask permission to come down. Sometimes, from far away, the young bulls answered him—with threats. At which, he'd lift his head and slowly stomp his splintered hoofs. The old cows paid no heed to him at all. Young heifers, silly flirts, would sometimes lift their silken heads to look, but never did one give an answering call.

More days slunk slowly, dimly by. Spring merged its emerald tints with zinnobers of early summer. Mid-days grew hot, but nights were long and chill. The snow-caps on the nearer mountain peaks took to themselves a sapphire hue, though those afar still blended with the billowy, cirrus clouds.

The air was rank with scent of fresh young growing things. Warm puffs of air sprang seemingly from nowhere; bits of the high winds caught and shunted

down the mountain sides, friction-heated by their rugged slide. They whispered of the dry, hot winds to come, these babyish chinooks. The orejana noted such things dully. Only when he raised his head to stare into the north did he seem to be aware of them.

There came a day when he stood, thus idly gazing. Who knows he did not have his dreams? Mechanically, his tender nares spread wide. Into his lungs they sucked great draughts of air, a different tempered air than they had felt for weeks. The orejana tipped his head short back. His top lip narrowed, turned backward on his nose. The nares lobes closed to shut the air in, tight. Again and yet again, he tested the new air, his eyes half closed as though to shut out from his mind all other things.

The air was acid, sterile, borne up by a little stealthy wind, a wind that touched him slyly here and there. Even his thick hide shrank from it. He shrugged and stomped to try to shake it off. A memory stirred within his dulling brain. "Somewhere, sometime, he'd felt that tingling touch before." The touch of fingers icy cold with death; reaching, always reaching, feeling for a gripping hold. Long he stared, searchingly, accusingly, into an ice green northern horizon. For now he knew who owned those creepy fingers. They were the fingers of the ice king whom the fairy Spring had sought to banish to his Arctic lair. The little wind grew stronger, and soon it held the scent of sweet and tender things squeezed dry, of fresh young growing things choked to black death by myriad ruthless hands.

TIME carried on; the wind grew cold and strong. It slicked the orejana's ragged coat. Along the northern horizon arose a bank of opaque white. Again he made test of the air and stomped impatiently. Pendulum-like he swung his head, as though distraught by thoughts that worried him.

The wind increased its speed, grew boisterous and rough. It pinched the orejana where his wounds had failed to heal. It stung and smarted where the wait-a-bits had clawed away his hair. Twice he turned, halfway around, and looked toward the deep-sunk meadowland. His eyes searched long, the screening, jagged rocks and waving, thorny brush. But after each such searching, he turned again to face the threatening north and rumbled low, deep, nervously within his dewlapped throat.

Above the western horizon, two iridescent sundogs danced and soon the very air he breathed seemed made of tiny, sparkling jewels. A mist, like foamy white-caps on a sea, rolled mountainward across the distant plains. Green brush and trees bent moaning in the wind. The sharp rocks whistled; the mist arose to curtain off the plains. The orejana turned his humping back to it.

The wind increased its might, put shoulder to the orejana's rump and shoved him forward till he braced. Somewhere, far off, a long, sad cry arose. It came again, a baffled, mournful sound. The cries were answered from quite near. The lobos, empty-bellied, called each other from an unsuccessful hunt. He let his heavy head hang down and, over it, the sunlight formed a shimmering halo with a golden glow. Tears from his ever-weeping eyes froze in hard rivulets along his nose. He took a dozen forward steps.

From off the hidden prairies, came débris flying in the wind, sage brush and cactus leaves, tumble-weeds and wisps of grass. A huge black bat came flapping ragged wings. Blindly it dashed against the rocks and threshed in fearsome agony. Startled from his lethargy, the orejana charged. Savagely he slashed it and snorted as its pieces flew away. Only a square of paper roofing from some distant line-camp's shack, but it served to stir him to a fighting pitch.

Unmindful of the bursting storm, he shook his battered head and roared. Forgetting he'd been outlawed, he again was king. Kings of the wild cattle, mightiest of beasts; even the grizzlies wanted naught from him. With head and tail raised high, he charged. Up and on, over the long hill he raged, heedless of the treacherous rocks, heedless of the thorny brush, heedless of the crashing trees, a roan-red meteor.

Warmed with his mighty charge, the blood flowed fast within his hardened

veins. His great heart pumped with strength renewed from days of passionless rest. Through the tall meadow grass he bounded, tail high flung like battle pennon. The young bulls, first to see him, bawled and ran in sudden fright. Calves joined their flight, thinking it was time to play. Cows followed calves and at their streamed-out tails the old king plunged and roared. And all the herd, except for one, circled near the canyon walls in wild stampede. But when the leaders came to where the hill stood at the meadow's foot they swept on by. The old king stopped and bawled to them, then vainly tried to head them off.

From back-high grass, which bordered on the pond, an old red cow shoved up her head. She looked about as though aroused from sleep and seemed to wonder at the running of the herd. She stared at it, forgetting for the time to chew her cud. And then she saw her ancient mate and wondered more. She seemed to ask him with a look: "What brings you down from banishment?" Then something stung her bulging eyes; it caused her to look up. The sun which warmed her while she'd slept had faded out. Wise from her years, the old cow understood. Instantly she broke into a lumbering run.

Out of the tall grass she lunged and to the vanguard of the herd as it swept by. Though old, the cow was lean and farrow; soon she gained the "point" and led the tiring bulls. They took her leadership as matter of course; in all their wanderings she had led the way. Gradually she slowed the pace. And when she came to where a path ran up the blocking hill she turned to it and led the whole herd up. Behind them, threatening those who seemed inclined to balk, charging them, driving them, came their ancient boss. When halfway up, he stood and blocked the path.

A gale which bore a load of powdery ice rushed at the cattle as they neared the hogback's crest. They shivered, humped their backs and bawled. Some tried to dodge back past the guarding bull. He sent them scurrying up again. They milled and shoved and fought among themselves but finally quieted to seek such shelter as the rocks and brush and stunted trees would give. The blizzard drove on just above their heads. Hardly had the wild herd ceased its milling when the white wall struck the hill. A mass of almost solid snow, it rolled on over, a colossal juggernaut. It sucked the very air from out their gasping lungs. The little calves sank, soundless, to their knees. And then the air snapped back again to fill the vacuum which that giant plunger made. The wild herd sucked it in and coughed. The air was filled with particles of lung-choking ice. The young calves blatted from the sudden pain. Like diamond dust, the crystals clustered on the cattle's still damp sides.

THREE dreadful days and nights that late spring blizzard raged. Death stalked the rolling prairies and the far flung hills. Out on the plains, the branded cattle smothered in the mighty drifts. Upon the hill, the wild ones huddled in dumb misery.

Tough were the fierce, wild longhorns inured to hardships which no "pampered" cattle could endure. And in the veins of most of these there coursed a measure of the blood of their great fighting king.

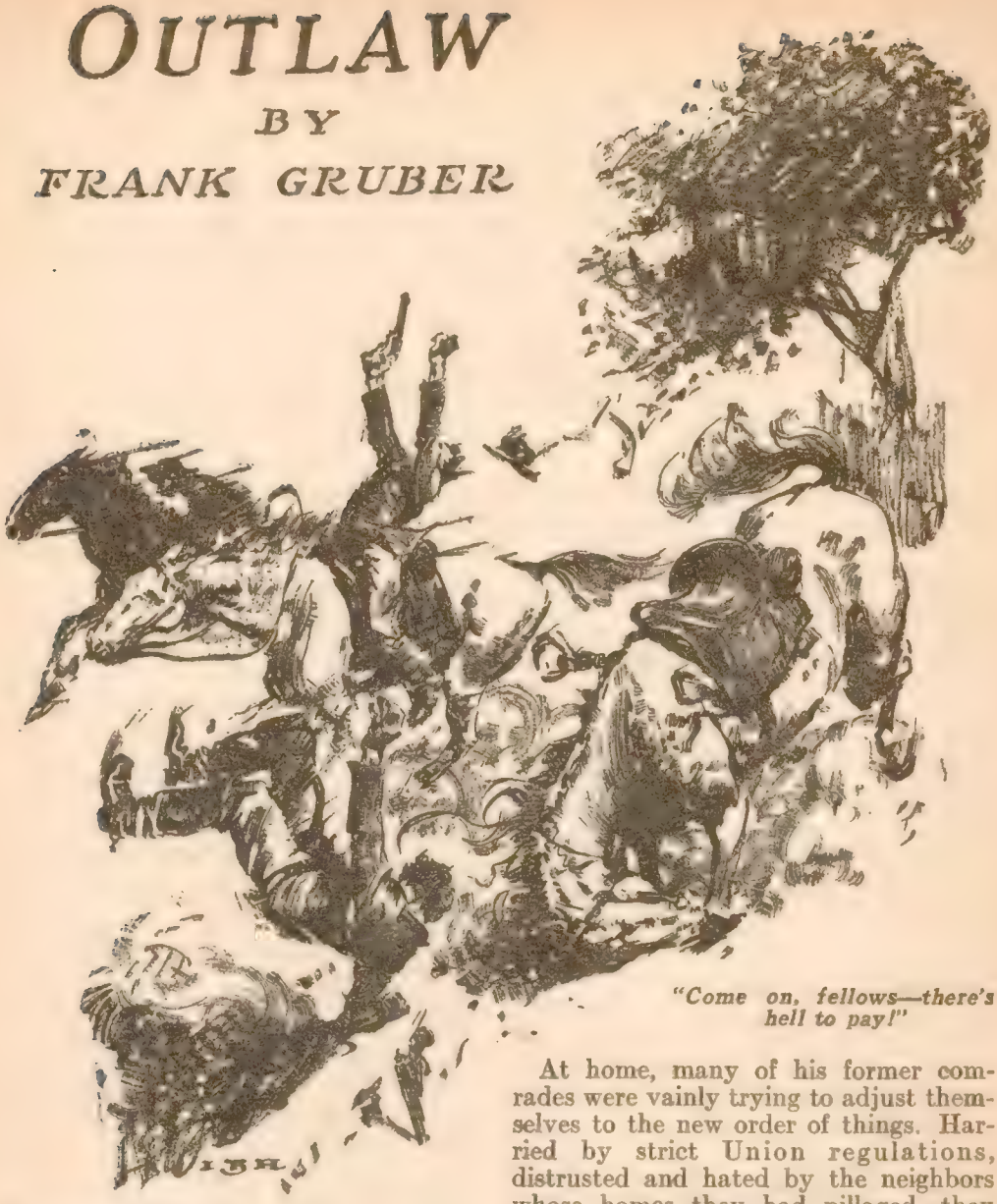
A "mountain man", an orejana of the human race, had taken refuge in the lobos' cave. Throughout the storm a truce had mutely been declared. But as days passed two pairs of hungry, yellow eyes glared into eyes of steely grey. And no pair dared to close in sleep. Then came Snow Eater, the chinook wind, in hot rage and gobbled up the arrant flakes. He spat them out in torrents which rolled down the mountain-sides and hills to form a lake out on the semi-arid plains. The "mountain man" and lobos left the cave to hunt.

The orejanas met upon the meadow-blocking hill. The man kind stood, for long, and stared, awhile he read the trail-sign that remained. The beast kind also stood and stared, not down into the meadow where his herd now grazed, but upward where a hundred huddled bodies lay. He stood, his sturdy legs far spread, his forward-pointing horns aimed level with the path. He stood, at guard, though frozen, hard, in death.

OUTLAW

BY

FRANK GRUBER



"Come on, fellows—there's hell to pay!"

THE Civil War was over, and a great nation, united once more, was healing the wounds of battle. But in hard-hit Kansas and Missouri the hatreds still lived on.

Jim Chapman, ex-guerrilla, one of the men who had ridden with Bloody Bill Anderson, had gone to Mexico after the war. Now, partly disabled from wounds he was ready to return home to live in peace. But he soon discovered that while there was amnesty for defeated soldiers, there was none for men who had ridden under the black flag.

At home, many of his former comrades were vainly trying to adjust themselves to the new order of things. Harried by strict Union regulations, distrusted and hated by the neighbors whose homes they had pillaged, they were for the most part beaten and helpless. But a handful of the most spirited, refusing to submit to laws they considered unjust, had turned bandit.

Chapman had no intention of joining them. But a renegade Union officer, Jim Pike ambushed him and a friend, killing the latter and wounding Chapman, who was charged with the murder. Evelyn Comstock, the daughter of an influential banker, brought him, wounded, to the secret meeting place of some ex-guerrillas and they nursed him back to health. In the meanwhile, he discovered that he

was a hunted man. Raging at the unjust persecution, he agreed to join the gang.

They held up the Freedom bank, getting away with fifteen thousand dollars. Chapman went to Texas, posing as a wealthy cattle man, after having met Alan Vickers, the famous detective, in Chicago and barely escaping arrest.

In Abilene the long arm of the law reached out for him again. Billy Bligh, one of the bandits, had been arrested and killed while trying to escape. And a few days later Chapman learned that his brother-in-law had been arrested in connection with the robbery.

There was only one thing Chapman could do. He wrote to Martin Halliday, a prominent lawyer in Freedom, offering to give himself up for trial in order to clear an innocent man's name.

PART III

CHAPTER IX

FUGITIVE'S TRAIL

JIM CHAPMAN remained in his room at the Missouri House in Kansas City, venturing outside only after dark, for his meals. In mid-afternoon of the second day after he mailed the letter, a porter knocked on the door.

"Gen'man to see you, Mistah Castlemon."

Chapman opened the door and regarded the tall man in the gray Prince Albert.

"How do you do, Mr. Halliday," he said.

Halliday came into the room and Chapman closed the door behind him.

Halliday said, "I got your letter, containing the retainer."

"You're accepting?"

Halliday's eyes surveyed the room, not missing the drawn shades. "Why did you write to me? There are other attorneys in Freedom."

"They're not all Southerners."

"Some of them are. Good men. Frankly, I don't want to accept your case."

"It's not my case, Mr. Halliday," Chapman exclaimed. "I want nothing. All I want you to do is look after my brother-in-law, Ed Taylor. He had nothing to do with that—that matter for which they arrested him."

Halliday's forehead wrinkled. "They have no real case against Taylor. They —well, they arrested him merely to smoke you out."

"But Ed's in jail! They'll hold him there for months, put off the trial—I want Ed released."

Halliday shook his head. "They've set enormous bail. Ten thousand dollars—in cash."

"You can get him out if you put up ten thousand?"

"Why, yes. But where would I get it?"

"If that's all that's standing between Ed and his freedom, I'll get the money."

"You have ten thousand dollars?"

"No, but I'll get it."

Halliday exclaimed, "You can't do that. I—I don't want anything to do with this."

Chapman looked at him pointedly. "Then why did you come?"

Halliday made an angry gesture. "Because I was a fool. Lord, man, do you realize that I'd be a party to—to that? I'd know beforehand just how you were going to get that money, and I'd be handling it after you got it. I can't do that."

"All right," said Chapman. "I'm sorry."

Halliday took a thick envelope from his pocket and laid it on the cheap dresser. "Your retainer. I—you can count on me to keep your confidence, but I just can't be a party. . . ."

"Yes. I know."

Halliday flushed and suddenly stepped to the door. He said, "Good-by," and went out.

SWIFTLY, Chapman got his carpet-bag from the closet and began packing his few belongings. Putting on his coat and picking up the carpet-bag he stepped to the door. At the moment he touched the knob, knuckles rapped on the other side of the panels.

Startled, Chapman set down the car-

pet-bag. When he straightened the Navy Colt was in his hand. He said: "Yes?"

"Jim," a voice said, "open up!"

He gasped and jerked open the door. Evelyn Comstock, her mouth trembling in a quavering smile, looked at him. "May I come in?"

"Miss Comstock," Chapman said, in a tone of awe. "You shouldn't have—" He closed the door behind her.

"Martin was here," she said. "I saw by his face that he'd lost his nerve."

"You know?"

"Of course. He came to me with the letter. Didn't want to come. I practically forced him, and then he couldn't go through with it."

"But I don't understand. Why should you force him to come here?"

"Why did you write to Martin?" she countered.

Embarrassed, he shook his head. "Why, I don't know of any other lawyers in Freedom. And he had been a Confederate."

"Are those the only reasons you selected Martin?"

He bit his lower lip. "Perhaps not. I remembered what you'd done for me and I was desperate. I wanted to get Ed out of his jam."

"I know, Anne's hit pretty hard."

"You've seen her? She blames me, of course."

"No, she doesn't blame you at all," Evelyn Comstock said. "She says they didn't give you a chance. You weren't looking for trouble and they brought it to you. I—well, I was there when it began. In a way, I was responsible for Pike's enmity toward you. He was behind it."

Chapman nodded. "I never told, but Pike was one of the men who killed Clarence Welker and shot me. They—including Pike—were wearing blue uniforms. Still, if it hadn't been that, it might have been something else."

"The war did things to all of us," Evelyn Comstock said in a low tone.

Something in her tone caused him to look steadily at her. And suddenly an electric shock ran through him. Confused, he said: "Did you come to Kansas City with Martin Halliday?"

"No. I came by carriage from Independence. I was afraid he would weaken at the last moment. He did."

"I can't blame him," Chapman laughed shortly. "He tells me that the only thing'll get my brother-in-law out of jail is ten thousand dollars. I told Halliday I'd get the money."

She gasped. "No! You wouldn't—again!"

"How else could I get ten thousand dollars?"

"But twice!" she cried. "I—I saw you at Richfield. Your face—it was terrible. It's haunted me ever since."

"You prevented your brother from shooting me."

"You were going to let him shoot you, rather than stop him. I—I stopped that. But—"

He took a step toward her, saw that she wasn't going to retreat and that knowledge stopped him. He groaned. "Oh, why did I ever come back to this country? I should have stayed in Mexico."

"Is it too late to go back?"

"Back where?"

"I don't know. Perhaps to four years ago, before you got into the war. After all, you're young."

"I'm twenty-one," he said dully. "And I'm an old man."

"No, you're not. You've made one mistake. But it can be rectified."

"How?"

Her nostrils flared a little and she looked at him defiantly. "Give yourself up."

That had never once occurred to Chapman, not even in his most despondent moments. He stared stupidly at Evelyn. "They'll kill me. They'll hang—"

"No, they won't. Martin says if you pleaded guilty to the bank robbery at Richfield, you'd be convicted of that alone."

"I don't believe it," Chapman said harshly. "They'd charge me with murder too."

The light went out of Evelyn's eyes. "Then—you're going on?"

"I can't go back. Can't you see—" Desperately, he stared at her. "They killed Billy Bligh. They arrested my brother-in-law. They want me and

Clem Tancred. They wouldn't give us a chance. We fought on the wrong side in the war and they can't forgive us for that."

Evelyn turned partly away from Chapman. She said, "I'd hoped you could find peace. I'm sorry for you, Jim Chapman."

He was sorry for himself. Sorry because of the thing he had seen in her eyes a few minutes ago. He could have reached out then and touched her, and he hadn't been able to do it. It was too late.

She turned at the door and said, "Good-by, Jim." And he nodded dumbly and watched her go.

After Evelyn Comstock had gone, Chapman waited ten minutes. Then he left his room and went across the street to the Hoffman House. He found Clem and Dan Tancred in a smoke-filled room, playing cribbage.

They saw his sober face and Clem asked softly, "Well, Jim?"

"Halliday won't help Ed. The only thing that will is ten thousand dollars."

Clem got up and reached for his coat. "There's ten thousand dollars in the Independence bank. Do we go for it?"

Chapman nodded.

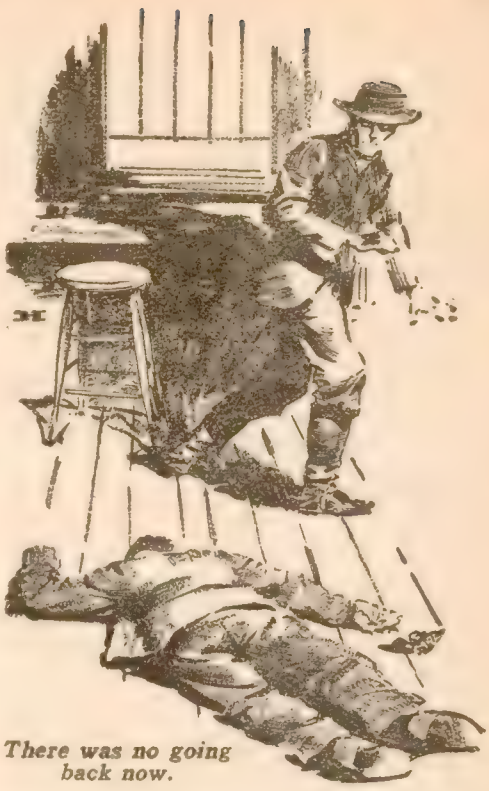
IN sight of Independence they put their horses into a canter and rode straight up the Kansas City road. It was excellent timing, for the bank cashier was just in the act of unlocking the door of the bank. His teller, who had arrived earlier, was already waiting for his superior.

Clem Tancred and Chapman threw their reins to Dan and leaped to the ground, moving swiftly upon the bank officials. They did not draw their weapons until they were directly behind them; then each suddenly thrust a gun into a man's back.

"Inside," Chapman ordered viciously. "This is a holdup and we don't want any nonsense."

The frightened bank men stumbled into the room. Clem and Chapman shoved them along to the vault.

"Open up this box and be damned quick about it!" Clem cried.



There was no going back now.

The cashier fumbled with a bunch of keys and dropped them finally. Chapman scooped them up and taking one at random stabbed it into the lock. It worked and he took off the lock and threw it to the floor.

Then he pulled out the inevitable wheat sack with which they had provided themselves. "Put all the money into that, all except the silver. I'll give you thirty seconds!"

The cashier went into the vault. His trembling hands opened a steel box and he brought out stacks of money, which he thrust into the sack.

Chapman glanced back to look through the front window, to see that all was right with Dan Tancred outside.

"Jim!" cried Clem Tancred.

There were two explosions, one a gun in the palsied hand of the cashier inside the vault and the other Clem's. As Chapman whirled, the cashier was crumpling to the floor. The teller bleated:

"Don't shoot me!"

Clem Tancred gave him a violent shove into the vault. "Then finish that job and hurry up, by damn!"

Jim Chapman was staring, fascinated, at the cashier, lying upon the floor.

"I had to do it," Clem said.

Chapman nodded. Clem undoubtedly had saved his life—but they had taken a life, while engaged in a criminal enterprise.

There was no going back now.

Outside the bank, Dan Tancred fired a warning shot. Immediately a half dozen guns roared. Chapman heard Dan Tancred's scream: "Come on, fellows! There's hell to pay!"

"That's enough," Chapman said, snatching the wheat sack from the teller's hands.

He turned and plunged for the door of the bank. Clem was at his side.

It was a glass door and as Chapman reached for it, the glass splintered into a thousand pieces. Chapman felt bee stings in two or three places.

They hit the sidewalk and Clem Tancred whistled. Up the street, a half dozen men with rifles and shotguns were advancing steadily upon the bank. Dan Tancred, in the saddle, was already bleeding from a gash on his forehead.

"Come on!" he cried frantically.

Chapman and Clem sprang for their horses, which Dan Tancred immediately released. They whirled them to gallop northward on the Freedom road and four horsemen were thundering down upon them from that direction.

That was something they could understand. A charge had to meet with a charge. Four to three odds was not too much. Clean Tancred let out a yell.

"Yip—yip—yee—ow—eee!"

Almost as if by a signal, the three bandits fired. One of the charging horses broke in its stride and plunged to the hard earth, throwing his rider. Another rider let out an awful scream and fell off his horse. The other two galloped past, on swerving horses.

DEEP in the almost impenetrable brush that was east of Independence, the trio rested. This was country they knew from the old days. Federals had swarmed through it in companies and battalions and never had they routed the wartime guerrillas.

You could hear men thrashing in the underbrush a quarter of a mile away and you could merely slip aside and watch them pass—you could, if you were a guerrilla. A thousand men could not dislodge outlaws from this hilly jungle of scrub growth, not if the outlaws had friends nearby to feed them and send warning whenever a determined manhunt was about to get underway.

They had the friends. Once he was in the brush, Chapman wondered why they had risked riding all the way to Iowa and dispersing the last time. This was where they should have come. Here—into Nowhere.

They kept their horses saddled and hobbled, so they would not stray too far. There was plenty of forage for the animals and they would not suffer with the saddles on their backs during the day. At night they could be taken off.

They counted the loot. It totalled just short of $12,000.

Clem Tancred snorted when he learned the result. "That leaves us two thousand after we put up the ten thousand for Ed Taylor."

"No," said Chapman. "I still have three thousand of my own. That goes into the pot. We share alike on everything. Money won't mean anything for awhile, anyway. We've got to lay low. There's going to be a lot of activity around here. It may even get too hot. But before it does, I'm going to take this money to my sister."

"Now?" Clem asked.

"It's as good a time as any. They'll figure we're trying to put distance behind us. I'd better go there alone, however."

He left the brothers and struck out in a northeasterly direction, leading his horse. It was seven or eight miles to his sister's home and he shouldn't have any trouble completing his errand and being well on the return trip before darkness fell.

Now that the die was definitely cast, a load seemed lifted from Chapman's mind. The thing he had been fearing

most these last few weeks, he realized, was that, having stepped overboard once, he would do it again. Now he had done it, and there was no going back.

He regretted the killing of the bank cashier, but it had been his life or the other man's. Clem had acted in the only manner possible. He would have done as much for Clem.

He recalled the first man he had ever killed, a fat German well in his forties, a Union militiaman. He had seen the man's face for days afterwards, until he had killed his second man.

That had been war. Well, so was this. They'd driven him into it, using the blue uniform of the old days. Retaliation was justified. If they called him an outlaw now instead of a guerrilla, what was the difference? His life was no more forfeit now than it had been during the war.

He crossed a winding tote road and plunged into brush on the other side. After awhile he hit the road running north of Freedom, within a half mile of where Pike and his ruffians had killed Welker and wounded Chapman a few weeks ago. A farmer was riding by on a mule and Chapman waited under cover until he had gone around a turn, before dashing across the open himself.

He was careful this time to approach the cabin from the side away from the Hobsons, remembering what Billy Bligh had said about his sister's neighbors being Yankee spies.

HE made a half circle of the clearing and was disconcerted to see a man splitting wood behind the cabin. He waited for five minutes until the man stopped working, half-turning, to wipe his face with a handkerchief. Then Chapman exclaimed in relief. It wasn't his brother-in-law, but it was Hutch Tompkins.

Hutch belonged to the right side. Tying his animal's reins to a sapling, Chapman walked out into the clearing. Hutch saw him coming and recognized him instantly.

"Jim!" he cried. "You hadn't ought to come here."

Chapman shook hands with Hutch. "What're you doing here?"

"Well, Annie ain't fit for choppin' wood, so I figured mebbe I'd better come and help out a little. You know about Ed, don't you?"

"That's why I'm here. Where's Anne?"

Anne had already seen him from the back window. She came rushing around the side of the house. "Jim, come in the house, quick!"

He followed her. "Anyone been here today?"

"No, not today, but for weeks all sorts of men have been spying on us. They'd ride past in front and when we'd speak to them, they'd ask if this was the road to Centerville, or Freedom or somewhere. And Ed'd see them in the woods."

"What you need," said Chapman bluntly, "is a good dog. One that'll sink his teeth into strangers."

"Ed got a dog. He was poisoned the third day we had him. But Jim—"

"Yes, Anne?"

"You went and done it. Threw in with the Tancreds and the others. You did rob the Richfield bank, didn't you?"

Chapman looked thoughtfully at his sister. He said, "The less you know about me, the better off you'll be. All I'll say is that Ed didn't have anything to do with that job. And I know that they threw him in jail to smoke me out. So I brought you the money to put up for his bail."

He began pulling it out of his pockets. Anne stared.

"Then, it's true!"

Chapman said deliberately: "Where's Tommy?"

She nodded to the bedroom. "Taking his afternoon nap. He—I suppose I have to take this money. We need Ed here now more than ever."

"Now?" Chapman asked sharply.

She nodded, flushing. "There's going to be another."

Chapman nodded, frowning. It was so true: the poor always had children. Ed could scrape but a bare living from his few acres of cleared land.

"All right," he said, "Get Ed out. They may not bring him to trial. But if they do, he'll be acquitted. They haven't got a thing against him. You'll get the bail money back then. Keep it."

HUTCH TOMPKINS came to the door and coughed loudly. When Chapman turned he gestured with his head.

Chapman went outside. "Dick Wood hallooed," Hutch told him. "He won't come up until I whistle. Is it all right?"

"Yes," said Chapman, and after Hutch had put his fingers to his mouth and whistled twice, "Who started all this stuff?"

Hutch grinned. "Some of the boys. You know they're all with us—all the old-time Confederates, that is. Dick beat the hell out of a Vickers man only two days ago."

"A Vickers man!" Chapman exclaimed. "How do you know he was a Vickers man? Did he admit it?"

"Uh-uh, he didn't admit anything. But what else would a stranger be around here? Hell, there been fifteen-twenty of them nosing around since—"

Dick Wood suddenly materialized out of the woods. He stopped when he saw Jim Chapman, then broke into a run.

He shot a look at the house, then trotted to one side. Chapman and Hutch followed.

"I just got the news," Dick Wood said excitedly. "About Independence, I mean. Your sister know?"

Chapman shook his head. "Who told you?"

"It's all over Freedom. The minute I heard it I dashed over here."

"Why?"

Dick Wood reddened. "Aw, what the hell, Jim. You don't have to be that way with Hutch and me. Ain't Clem told you the fellas that was in on the Freedom thing?"

"I never asked him." Chapman looked at Hutch. "You, too?"

Hutch spread out his hands. "I bought me some good cows and a new plough and a seed drill."

"See?" Dick Wood said reproachfully. "And you should have told us before you went to Richfield. You got a nice haul there."

"They lied. It was only fifteen thousand. How much do they say was taken at Independence?"

"Fifty thousand or more."

Chapman winced. "It was less than twelve. I just brought ten of it here to get Ed out of jail."

Dick Wood nodded. "Where's Clem?"

"In the brush. Dan's with him. That's all. You all know about Billy, of course."

Wood swore. "Gregg murdered him, the—! But Gregg's number is up. He knows it, too. Don't even dare ride out of Freedom any more. Somebody took a crack at him last week." Dick Wood smirked.

Hutch chuckled. "And that loud-mouthed George Pike, he took himself off on a trip to Minnesota or somewhere. I wonder if he'll be back."

Chapman looked narrowly at his friends. He sensed that things were changing around Freedom. "What about the soldiers?"

"Oh, they're still here. Only they don't go out much at nights any more." Hutch put his tongue in his cheek. "It ain't going to be so healthy for the Vickers men any more—is it, Dick?"

Dick Wood smirked. "In a little while more you won't even have to hide in the brush, Jim."

Chapman shook his head. "It'll never be like that, fellows. The bank cashier at Independence was killed—"

"Uh," said Dick, "and some dumb farmer, too. What of it?"

Chapman's eyes clouded. "They'll declare martial law."

"Nah, they won't," said Dick Wood. "Down in the southern part of the state, the folks have got together and they're riding around wearing white bed-sheets and scarin' the hell out of the Yanks. Besides, don't you read the papers? There're some of our people in the legislature that was just elected. They can't do much yet, but they can squawk and in another year or two—well, Missouri always was a Democratic state, except for the lop-eared Dutch."

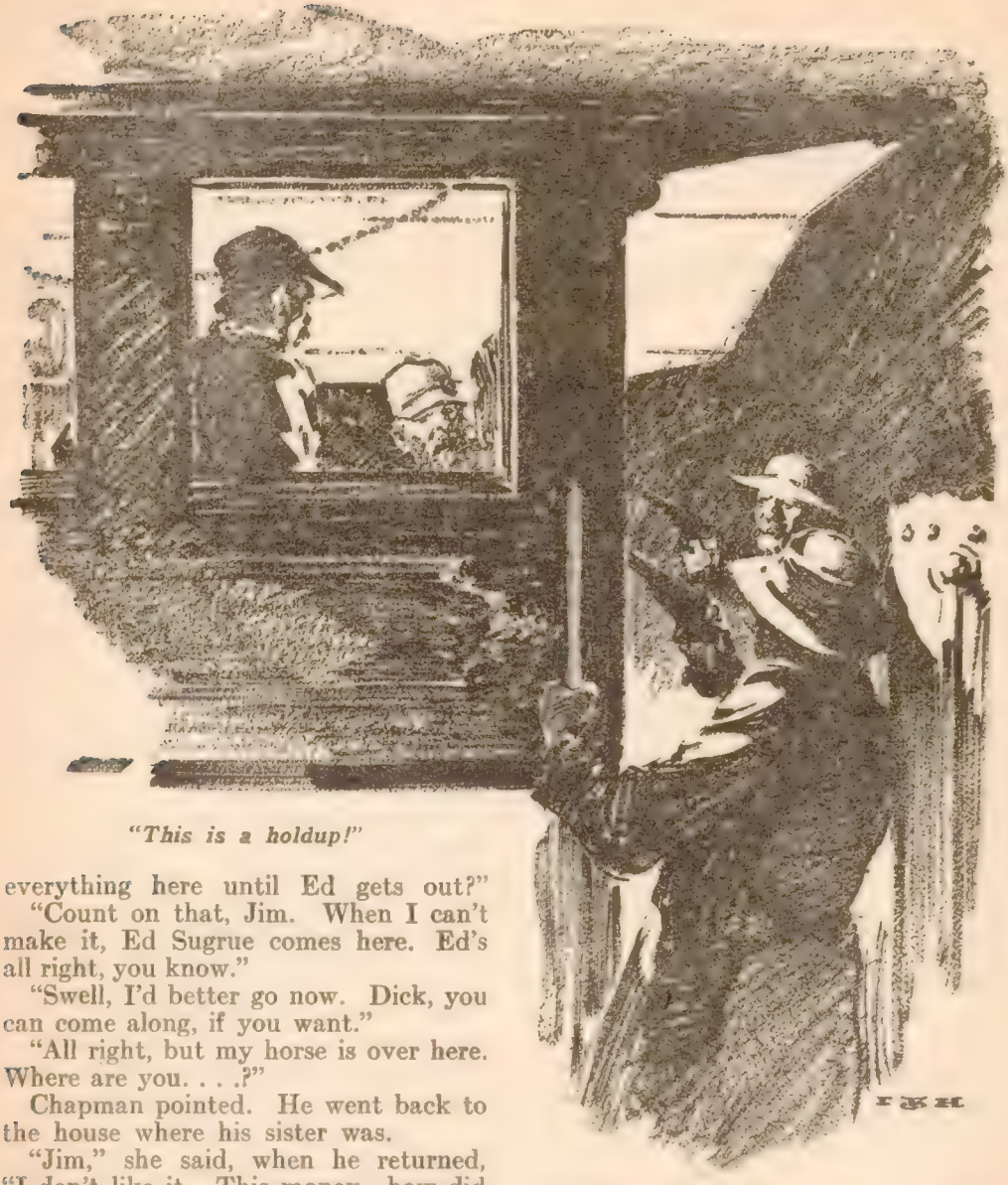
Chapman thought a moment. "Dick, they know you beat up the detective?"

"No, I caught him alone. I don't think he even saw my face. Why do you ask Jim?"

"Because we need someone who can go into town. If it's all right?"

"You know damn well it is."

"And you, Hutch? You'll look over



"This is a holdup!"

everything here until Ed gets out?"

"Count on that, Jim. When I can't make it, Ed Sugrue comes here. Ed's all right, you know."

"Swell, I'd better go now. Dick, you can come along, if you want."

"All right, but my horse is over here. Where are you. . . .?"

Chapman pointed. He went back to the house where his sister was.

"Jim," she said, when he returned, "I don't like it. This money—how did you get it?"

Chapman ignored the direct question. "Better go in to Freedom and get Ed to come home. Tell him I'll look in tomorrow night sometime."

"Will it be safe?"

He nodded. "It'll be all right."

THERE were six men in the band that robbed the Gallatin bank the day before Christmas. The new recruits were Dick Wood, Hutch Tompkins and Ed Sugrue. In February seven men rode into Centralia. Clark Welker had read the newspapers in Kentucky and returned to Missouri.

A week after the Centralia affair Ed Taylor rode into the brush and handed Jim Chapman a letter. "It came in an envelope addressed to me. Here's the envelope."

Chapman stared at the soiled envelope. It was addressed in ink, simply to Ed Taylor, Freedom, Missouri. But it was postmarked from Chicago.

Ed had never been in Chicago, in his life.

He looked at the second envelope. On it was written. "For Jim Chapman. Personal and Private. Please Forward."

Chapman put his thumb under the flap and ripped open the envelope. He took out the sheet of paper it contained and unfolded it.

His eyes widened. The letter written in a bold, scrawling hand, read:

Dear James Blake:—

Our mutual friend, at whose home we visited during your recent sojourn in this city, has asked me to write this letter to you. He thinks it will bear more weight coming from me.

Our friend has expressed several times his disappointment in your sudden departure from Chicago and believes it would have been to your advantage to talk things over with him. He is still of that opinion and wonders if you could not come and see him in Chicago—or if that is inconvenient, to arrange a suitable meeting place.

I am empowered to assure you that this meeting will be in the strictest confidence and nothing will be done to jeopardize your position.

The undersigned gives his personal pledge in addition to our friend's and wishes to say that wheat is still going down. Awaiting your reply with the deepest interest and sympathy, I beg to remain,

Your Obedient Servant,
Philip Castlemon.

Chapman read the letter twice, then slowly folded it and put it away in his pocket.

"Bad news, Jim?"

Chapman's mouth twisted. "No. It's from a friend—a friend I didn't know I had."

Later, he spread the letter face down on his saddle and with a stub of pencil started to write a reply. Finally, however, he tore the sheet of paper in half and applied a match to both halves.

Clem Tancred, stretched out on a blanket nearby, said, "Love letter, Jim?"

Chapman winced. The shot came too close to his thoughts. It was because of Evelyn Comstock that he had started to write a reply to the letter.

He hadn't seen her since Kansas City. That was more than four months now. Yet, during those four months he had contrived, every week, to obtain a copy of the *Freedom Herald*. He saw her name often. But there was never any mention of the approaching nuptials.

Chapman said to Clem Tancred: "I may take a little trip to Chicago."

Clem sat up. "I'll go with you. I'm getting tired of this loafing around. I want to get some books."

"Books, Clem?"

Clem flushed. "You know I always read a lot. I like history—ancient history. I saw an advertisement in the *Kansas City Star* about a new set on the old Roman stuff. I'd like to get it."

CHAPTER X

NO QUARTER ASKED

CHAPMAN said to the doorman of the Board of Trade. "I'd appreciate it if you would take a message to Mr. Philip Castlemon, the trader, and inform him that his friend, Mr. Blake of Missouri, would like to see him." He pushed a greenback into the uniformed man's hand.

One minute later, Philip Castlemon, leaner than ever, came striding up to the door. "Blake!" he exclaimed with pleasure, "I'm glad you came."

Chapman didn't know until then how much he had missed his brief friendship with the Chicago wheat trader.

"I'm sorry I ran out that night, Castlemon."

"It's all right. Shall we go to Al's office? He's in the city, even though we weren't expecting to see you quite so soon."

Chapman hesitated. "Do you mind? I've a friend with me, and for his sake I'd rather the meeting was not prearranged."

Castlemon reddened.

"I understand," he said, a bit stiffly. "You must be cautious. Well, how do you want to arrange it?"

"Send a messenger to his office. Have Mr. Vickers come to the Palmer House alone. You meet him there and take a carriage. Drive west on Madison Street and somewhere along the road I will meet you."

They parted and Chapman frowned as he watched the wheat trader walk stiffly across the street to a telegraph office. Castlemon was a gentleman and wasn't used to having his word doubted, but too much water had flowed under the Chicago bridge since the autumn before.

On Adams Street he rented a rig and drove swiftly up Madison Street for a mile and a half. He allowed the horse to rest for a few minutes then, before beginning a more leisurely drive eastward.

On the bridge crossing the river he stopped to watch a flatboat drift by underneath. When he shook out the lines, he saw Vickers and Castlemon in a carriage coming toward him.

Chapman pulled over to meet them, made a wide turn and came up from the rear. He called: "Would you mind exchanging places with me, Mr. Castlemon?"

Vickers stopped his carriage and Castlemon climbed down and came over to Chapman's carriage. Chapman got out and walked forward.

Alan Vickers' face was grim. He did not offer to shake hands and Chapman climbed in stiffly.

"You should have accepted that job last summer," Vickers said.

"I told you then I was a Confederate."

"You didn't tell me you'd been a guerrilla. But I'd have overlooked even that. Now I don't mind telling you, Chapman, you're in pretty deep. However, I've a proposition to make you. Surrender and stand trial for the Richfield job, and we won't press any of the others."

"We?" Chapman asked, bluntly.

"Of course. The banks have to continue business in Confederate territory. The railroads are my clients. Their business has fallen off ten per cent since you began operations in Missouri?"

"How could anything that I've done affect the railroads?"

"You've scared people out of Missouri," Vickers said grimly. "The newspapers all over the country have played up these things. They're calling Missouri the Outlaw State. People aren't going to settle there. Mercantile firms are asking for cash from Missouri business men. They say they can't extend credit there, because the banks are not safe. The Cagel bank in Freedom closed its doors. So did the Richfield bank."

"The Cagel bank was reopened by Major Comstock," Chapman retorted. "Less than fifteen thousand was lost in the Richfield bank."

Vickers' eyes glittered. "They claimed forty thousand. I wonder—well, never mind. As I said, the railroads want the Missouri gang broken up. They're more interested in that than they are in sending the bandits to the penitentiary for long terms. They're willing to go easy on you fellows—"

"Fellows?"

"Of course. There are a half dozen of you, at least."

Chapman stiffened. "Are you asking that I surrender them?"

Vickers turned sidewards. "They'll get off with light sentences. Probably not more than five or ten years."

"And I?"

Vickers moistened his lips with his tongue. "Ten. Fifteen at the outside."

(Continued on page 102)

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 48 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange Power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, drive a lovely car, own a newspaper and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-Law, under any and all circumstances.

You, too, may find and use the same staggering Power of the God-Law that I use. It can bring to you, too, whatever things are right and proper for you to have. Do you believe this? It won't cost much to find out—just a penny post-card or a letter, addressed to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 138, Moscow, Idaho, will bring you the story of the most fascinating success of the century. And the same Power I use is here for your use, too. I'll be glad to tell you about it. All information about this experience will be sent you free, of course. The address again—Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 138, Moscow, Idaho. Advt. Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.

"Get going," Pokey said. "And keep in sight all the time."

FRESH OUT OF MERCY

By L. W. CLAFLIN

CHRIS VANDER came awake slowly, like a man drugged. He felt doped, with fatigue.

It took him a few moments to get things straight in his fogged mind. It was mid-afternoon; the wall clock told him that. And he was in his office, a two-by-four cubicle on the third floor of Harnden Motors, Inc. Just across the alley he could see the lights of the Harnden tractor factory. Between him and the lights was a wall of driving snow.

The phone rasped and Vander realized suddenly that this was the sound that had brought him awake. He scooped it up and said in a tired voice, "Chris Vander speaking."

The voice on the wire belonged to Ed Thornton, service manager for Harnden. He and Vander had been friends ever since that day when one of the stockholders had tried to push a relative into Vander's job as top trouble-shooter for the outfit.

"What's that?" Thornton had snapped at them. "Replace Chris Vander? Listen, Harnden makes these tractors but Chris Vander makes them go. Remember that."

They'd remembered, and Vander was still top trouble-shooter for Harnden's.

Thornton's voice was sharp now, a sort of affectionate nagging that told Vander how worried he was about something.

"What's the matter up there?" he snapped. "I've been ringing you for ten minutes. Are you dead?"

"Just about," Vander told him. "Does it matter?"

"Plenty. You're going out on a job."

Vander looked out at the wind-driven snow. Sleet rattled like birdshot against the window.

"Hang up," he said wearily. "You're very funny."

"You won't think so when I tell you. This is a job, not a joke."

"Now listen," Vander explained patiently, "I've just come off a thirty-six hour stretch without sleep. Got in at eleven this morning. We've got other men. Where's Hawkins? Or Merrill?"

"This is all yours," Thornton told him. "The state highway department gets one of our tractor plows stuck in Pirateville Notch. Highway plugged and traffic tied up in a bowline knot." He paused, said significantly, "The state buys lots of tractors, Chris. They get super-service. Besides, they asked especially for you."

Vander groaned, and didn't feel at all flattered.

"They've got mechanics," he argued.

"Sure. And some of 'em don't know a wrist pin from a push rod. They had one of that kind on this job."

"Yeah? What'd he say?"

"Plugged gas line. Only—it wasn't."

Vander sat up. "Now wait a minute. Is this a last year's T-20?"

"That's right."

Vander snorted. "I know what he said. Runs a little and then starts to die. Choke her a bit and she'll shove some more. When she quits altogether give her a rest and she'll do it all over again."

"Hey! said Thornton in surprise. "That's just what he said. Who told you?"

"Fourteen cases of the same complaint. Look, Harnden took a low bid on electrical equipment for the T-20 last year and got stuck with a lot of bum condensers. And that's where the trouble is, not in the gas line. I told 'em about it six months ago in a report and suggested that they make replacements."

"Yeah, I remember now," Thornton agreed. "But the Old Man thought that the company that made 'em ought to replace 'em and the company didn't agree, so they're still chewing about it."

"Big business," sniffed Vander.

"Sure," Thornton kidded him. "You're just an ignorant grease monkey. You couldn't understand such tricky things."

"I'll break your neck when I get down there," Vander growled.

Thornton laughed. He felt relieved. Now that Vander was taking over, the thing was off his mind.

"I'll get a service car warmed up," he said cheerfully. "The one with the radio. Music while you work."

THE storm was even wilder than Vander had thought. The wind tugged at the heavy service car and sent it lurching sideways on the slippery highway. Vander turned up the heater. Might as well be comfortable and entertained. He cut in the radio on a news broadcast.

A heavy storm was sweeping the country, said the announcer, with bitter cold and winds of gale force. Everything was tied up. Latest figures set the death toll at sixteen, with the storm still raging. . .

There had been a jail break at the state penitentiary that morning and Gunner Millson, who had last year chopped his way to fame with a submachine gun, had been sprung from behind prison walls and was now at large. . .

"If he's out in this," growled Vander, "he's a sucker."

More news! The war in Europe dragged on. Someone boasted of having sunk a ship and someone else denied it. . .

The state highway patrol wished the station to announce that Route 31 through Pirateville Notch was blocked. All cars on Route 31 detour through Dennyville; the Notch was impassable and closed to. . .

Vander cut off the radio. He had a pretty fair idea of conditions in the notch, and being told about them by some smooth-voiced lad in a warm studio was not his idea of entertainment.

He slowed down presently as he approached the route junction below the notch. A state trooper, muffled against the wind, was swinging the sparse traffic down the Dennyville road.

Vander leaned out and identified himself.

"About time," shouted the trooper above the wind. "And make it fast. A

couple cars stalled up there behind the plow.

"I'll have 'em out in twenty minutes," promised Vander. "I hope so," said the trooper. "I'm stuck here till you open the notch. And this ain't Palm Beach."

Vander rolled past and began to climb the twisting highway. Here and there were spots swept clean by the gale and in these he gathered momentum that sent the heavy car smashing through the intervening drifts. He fought his way upward in a series of lunges, smashing and pounding up until the road began to level off.

And suddenly the big car buried her nose in a drift. Snow foamed over her cowling; her wheels churned. He rocked her savagely, shot her backwards out of the drift. Then he leaned back and relaxed.

He was in the notch!

When the engineers brought route 31 from the west, eastward through the notch, they'd blasted a three-lane channel through solid rock. The walls on both sides rose sheer to a height of twenty feet. With the wind driving out of the northeast, snow cascaded over the north wall like water over a dam. It was already hip-deep in spots and drifting badly.

Up ahead Vander could see the stalled plow pointed east in her outside lane. The top of her cab stood out darkly in the white swirl of snow and her eight-foot V-blade lay more than half buried in a drift. Close behind her stool a light sedan, and twenty yards behind that a coupé. Vander left the service car in the outside lane heading west, climbed out and fought his way across to the plow.

He found the plow driver huddled in the cab. He was just a lad, not a day over twenty, half-frozen and scared.

"Cripes," he chattered, "am I glad to see you, Mr. Vander!" His purple lips stretched to a weak grin. "You probably don't know me but I've seen you a lot around Harnden's. My name's Tim Dugan."

Vander looked at him closely, jerked open his tool kit and brought out a vacuum bottle of black coffee.

"Put this in your belly, Dugan," he said, holding out a steaming cupful. "It'll do you more good than a shot of whiskey. And what's the idea of staying in this frozen cab? They've probably got heaters in those cars."

The lad seized the cup with shaking hands and gulped the scalding liquid.

"There's a dame in the coupé," he said between gulps. "Good looking, too. She wasn't none too cordial."

"Snooty, eh?"

Dugan shook his head. "Scared. She's all alone, 'cept the baby."

"A baby," echoed Vander. "In this mess?"

Dugan shrugged, still gulping coffee. "It's all right, I guess. She's got it all wrapped up in blankets. And the heater's running."

"What about the sedan?" asked Vander. "More babies?"

Dugan took the cup away from his face. He gave Vander an odd look.

"Yeah," he said queerly. "Tough babies. I wouldn't get in that sedan for a million bucks. You know who's in there? Gunner Millson and the two guys that sprung him outa the state pen this morning."

Vander felt the hairs prickle along the back of his neck. "You're having bad dreams, kid."

"I am, huh? Listen, you go stick yer neck in there like I did. I tell yuh I know him. I seen his pictures. He's setting right on the back seat with one of them—uh—Tommy-guns across his knees.

"A Tommy-gun, eh? Now look, kid—"

"All right. I'm just telling yuh what I seen. And I ain't drunk. Listen, how d'you suppose they're feeling up in here with maybe the cops coming up any minute to take us out on toboggans if you don't get that plow rolling? They're jumpy, I tell yuh. And they—Hey!" he broke off suddenly, "Here comes one of 'em now."

A TALL man left the front seat of the sedan and came plowing through the snow. He climbed up onto the tractor and thrust his head into the cab. His face was narrow and bony. His hands

were thrust into his overcoat pockets.

"You guys having a tea party?" he asked sourly.

"Coffee," corrected Vander. "Have some?"

The tall one fixed a pair of black, close-set eyes on Vander. "You supposed to be fixing this plow, smart guy?"

"When I get to it."

"What's keeping yuh?"

"Answering a lot of damn fool questions. Why don't you go back and sit down?"

The lean, bony face thrust close to Vander's.

"Why'n't you shut that smart yap of yourn," he snarled, "before I push it in?"

Vander straightened a little. "You must be feeling tough today, Skinny."

Dugan's face blanched with terror.

"Lay off, Mr. Vander," he gasped. "I told yuh—"

He choked off as the black eyes bored into him. They shifted warily to Vander, rested there suspiciously.

"Told yuh what?" he demanded.

"Scram," said Vander. "I got things to do." He was trying to be very casual about it but he could feel little chills chasing up and down his spine.

"Come on. What'd he say?"

"It's like this," Vander said evenly. "Do I get busy and start this plow shoving or do we sit here and have a nice long talk?"

The tall man's arm leaped and a gun struck Vander's ribs. "Climb outa here."

Vander hesitated. "What's the idea?"

"Get out. Both of yuh."

He herded them back through the snow, jerked open the back door of the sedan.

"Shove over, Gunner. We got company."

A heater fan hummed busily. It was warm in the sedan.

Gunner Millson moved into a corner. He was a small man with shifty eyes set deep in a grayish face. The kid hadn't lied; a machine-gun lay across his knees. He moved jumpily, his eyes shifting up and down the road.

The driver turned in his seat to look back, a squat, chunky man with an oversize head.

He said jerkily, "What's the idea, Poky?"

Poky, the tall one, knelt on the front seat, facing back. "I told yuh the kid recognized Gunner. He's been shooting his mouth off to this grease monkey."

"We can close it."

"Yeah, we can close both of 'em. But we gotta get that plow rolling first."

"We gotta get some gas first," said the driver. "We're burning it up running this heater. Mebbe we can get some outa the tractor." He turned to Vander. "How about it?"

"Sure," said Vander. "If you want to carry it in your pocket."

"Ain't yuh got a can in that truck of yourn?"

"No."

"Skip it," said Poky. "There's a dame in the coupé behind us. We'll throw her out and keep warm on her gas."

Millson spoke for the first time. He said in a dead flat voice, "Why'n't you guys carry a flag with my name on it, and fireworks? Mebbe a brass band." There was a tight silence.

"We gotta have gas," said the driver stubbornly. "And the dame—"

"Dames is bad luck for me."

"So's freezing. And running out of gas."

Millson's voice droned on flatly. "I had this all planned out, every move. Now it's all messed up screwy."

"You didn't plan the weather so good," Poky observed. "It ain't our fault the plow got stuck. It ain't our fault this kid poked his head in here. And it surer'n hell ain't my fault he got back and spilled it to this grease monkey. I told yuh—"

"Cut that motor," Millson droned dully. "We'll go back."

THEY piled out and plodded back to the coupé. The door was locked.

"Open up," yelled Poky.

The girl looked out, her eyes widening when she saw what Gunner carried. She shook her head.

Poky swung his gun and the glass splintered. He reached in and jerked open the door.

The girl stared at him, clutching her

baby against her. Her face was white.

"I haven't any money," she began.

"Get out," Poky snarled. He reached in and hauled her, stumbling, into the snow. Gunner slid into the seat.

"You shouldn't 'a' busted the window," he said flatly. "I come back here to be warm."

"We'll put a blanket over it," Poky told him. "Anyhow, it won't be for long." He swung on Vander. "Get up there and start that plow. And don't forget we can see yuh from here. Gunner don't carry that chopper for fun."

Vander looked at the girl, her slender body bent to shield the child from the storm. Anger surged up in him, a rising fury that swept away all caution.

"You go to hell," he said flatly.

Poky leaped. The driver closed in swiftly.

"Give it to him," he urged. "He wants it."

"Sure," Vander taunted. "Let me have it. And then what? You're still stuck behind that plow. I told a cop down at the junction that I'd be back in twenty minutes. Maybe you want him to send a snowshoe patrol up here to see what's keeping us?"

He had them there; he could tell from the look that flashed between them. They couldn't afford to stall much longer. Neither could they desert their car and start bumming rides along the highway, not with every cop in the state looking for Millson.

Poky's face brightened suddenly.

"All right, wise guy," he snapped. "We'll fix that."

He spun around and snatched the baby from the shivering girl. He stripped back the blanket and pressed his gun against the tiny forehead.

The girl leaped forward, screaming. The driver caught her, slammed her into the snow.

Dugan suddenly found his voice.

"Please," he quavered. "Have a little mercy."

"No mercy," Poky clipped menacingly. "We're fresh out." His voice was tight, jumpy.

"You win," said Vander swiftly. "Give her the baby."

Poky turned, tossed the child contemptuously into the snow. It struck lightly, sank a little way into the soft drift. The girl dove after it, brought it out, red-faced and wailing.

Vander's fists clenched until his fingers ached, but he kept his mouth shut grimly.

"Get going," Poky threatened. "And keep in sight all the time. And you—" he swung on Dugan—"you stand right alongside our car. Understand?"

Vander started away. The girl followed, stumbling along behind him.

He swung around suddenly and scooped her up in his arms. She was light, easy to carry. Pretty, too, as Dugan had said. She was sobbing quietly as she wiped snow from the baby's face with a tiny handkerchief. Between sobs she choked out, "I can walk."

"So can I," said Vander bitterly. "It's about all I seem able to do here." He hoisted her into the tractor cab. It was cold in there, but at least she was out of the storm.

He lifted the distributor shell that held the ailing condenser and took it up into the cab to keep it dry while he worked. He found the girl huddled in a corner, shivering. Her thin shoes were soaked and crusted with ice. Silk stockings clung wetly to her legs.

He striped off his sheepskin coat and flung it around her and the baby. It buttoned in front with room to spare.

"You mustn't do that," she protested feebly. "You'll freeze."

"Not the way I'm feeling." He said it quietly, with no trace of the fury that burned in him. But he added, "I could set fire to a brick."

She watched him, busy at his work, then asked quietly, "Who are they? What do they want?"

He told her, and regretted it instantly as he saw fear shadowing her face.

She asked haltingly, "What will they do with us?"

"With us?" he lied brightly. "Nothing. All they want is to get rolling."

"But—they must know that we'll tell the police, and—"

"Are you warm enough?" he cut in quickly. He didn't like the trend of her thoughts. She was no fool.

She hesitated. "I'm warm—now. With your coat. While you freeze."

"Lady," he said with false briskness, "I only wear that coat to give oomph to my figure."

She smiled wanly. "You aren't afraid, are you?"

"Not the way you mean it. I'm just afraid those punks won't forget some little thing, make one little mistake."

"What good would that do us?"

"Plenty. One little mistake can make lots of big changes. Like this, for instance."

He pulled out the bum condenser and held it up, a small cylindrical object no larger than his thumb.

"That's a mistake," he pointed out. "Weighs maybe four ounces. But on account of a four ounce mistake, eleven tons of tractor plow is deader'n last Friday's fish." He nodded. "Yeah, little mistakes make big changes. They sometimes change live men into dead ones."

He could see her thinking that over, trying to guess what went on in his mind.

"Do you mean," she hazarded hopefully, "that you've got a gun somewhere?"

"I don't need a gun. All I need is a chance."

"And if you get it—"

"You won't like what happens."

"I will too," she said fiercely. "They're beasts. They're not human. They were going to kill my baby." She raised her fear shadowed eyes to Vander. "And when he said 'No mercy' I almost died."

"Yeah," said Vander heavily. "No mercy."

He sat in silence for a moment, staring blankly at the floor. "No mercy," he said finally, as though thinking aloud. "We'll remember that."

HE'D been dead right in his guess about the condenser. With the new one in place the big motor rolled over once, then took hold with a roar. He cut it down gradually, letting it warm.

The cab door jerked open and Poky glared up at them.

"Get out," he told the girl.

"Keep the coat," Vander advised her. "I don't need it."

Poky climbed into the cab and took her place.

"Swing around and plow back to the car," he ordered.

Vander lifted the big plow and swung around. He plowed back until the steel point touched the sedan. Millson and the driver had come back to their own car. Dugan and the girl were getting into the coupé.

"Okay," said Poky. "Now we'll plow down to the junction and see that cop."

"The cop?"

"Yeah, the cop. And you're going to stick your head out and talk to him nice. I'll see to that. Tell him there's two cars up here and you're sending one down right away, but you don't want any traffic jammed up in here till you get the placed plowed clear. Tell him to keep traffic out till you send down the second car."

He leaned back and leered at Vander.

"Yeah," he smirked, "you tell him to wait for that second car. You understand?"

In a flash Vander understood, saw it so clearly that a sickening chill swept over him. The cop would wait in vain for that second car. It would never come! And when a snowshoe patrol finally forced its way up into the Notch, what they found there would make bloody headlines in the morning papers. And the killers would be gone.

He sat rigid in his seat, struck numb with the thought of it. His mind came alive suddenly, leaping at straws of hope. There must be a way—there had to be!

He turned slowly in his seat, looked at Poky. "So you've got it all figured out. To the last detail."

"Yeah. We have."

Vander's face broke unexpectedly into a wise, knowing grin. He turned away, smothering the grin.

"Okay," he said complacently.

Poky eyed him suspiciously. "Wait a minute. What's funny?"

"Funny? Nothing."

"You was smirking about something."

"You've got the jumps. You're seeing things."

The gun jabbed into his ribs. "Come on. Spill it. You got something figured out with that cop down there, huh?"

Vander edged away from the gun.

"Listen," he explained evenly, "if you

blast me with that cannon I couldn't talk anyway."

In swift fury the tall man struck him across the mouth. "Maybe that'll open your trap."

Vander went taut, fighting down the rage that shook him.

"It might," he said tightly, wiping the blood from his lips. "If there was anything to tell. You're so damned suspicious you don't trust yourself. Afraid of your own figuring. Might be a hole in it."

"It ain't my figuring," Poky snapped. He eyed Vander uneasily, looked thoughtfully toward the sedan. "Maybe I better tell Gunner about this," he decided. He backed out of the cab. "Come on. And move that plow."

Vander edged the big blade sideways so that they could get around it without wallowing in the snow. Poky herded him out and stopped him in front of the plow.

"You stand here. No need of you being in on this. You're too damned smart. And don't make no funny motions or you'll get sprayed with lead." He stalked up the road and disappeared into the sedan.

Vander shivered; his lips ached in the bitter cold. And quite unexpectedly, they stretched to a small smile.

By sheer bluff he'd planted a seed of suspicion in Poky's mind, and the thought was faintly amusing. Especially so since Poky, in his determination to be excessively cautious, had overlooked an obvious fact; the fact that Chris Vander behind eleven tons of tractor plow could be more deadly than a dozen machine guns.

Only—Vander was still in front of the plow.

HE FLAILED his arms, stamping his feet in an effort to keep warm. Back and forth he tramped along the edge of the plow, from point to heel, carefully keeping himself in view.

By now, he decided, they should be deep in discussion, perhaps a little off guard. He paced monotonously back and forth. From heel to point. About face. From point to heel.

He poised there for an instant, hurled himself around the end of the plow and leaped for the cab.

His outstretched hand slapped the throttle open and his foot booted the clutch. Gears clashed and the big machine leaped forward.

He saw the back window of the sedan drop, and he ducked low.

The big machine gathered speed; only five yards now to go. The windshield dissolved suddenly showering him with shattered glass. Splinters flew out of the cab roof.

He jerked back the lever on the hydraulic lift and the big plow surged upward. He let it rise until it hung before him like a mighty V-shaped shield. A torrent of lead poured against its sloping sides and slithered off as harmlessly as water off a rock.

He yelled in triumph, safe behind his huge shield. The dirty killers with their Tommy-guns—they might as well be kid's popguns for all the big plow cared. She was her own shield and fortress, thundering down on the sedan like an armored tank, her motor roaring and a tube of blue flame leaping from her exhaust. She closed in swiftly, for all her size; there was no time to leap from the sedan.

Vander jerked forward and the big blade dropped. Her point slid under the front axle of the sedan.

Up she came again and the sedan reared on its hind wheels, twisted drunkenly and toppled sideways on the shoulder of the highway.

The big plow lunged on. Her questing point raked the undercarriage and hooked under the rear axle. Caught like a wounded animal, the sedan dragged on its side.

Vander jerked the big machine around and headed for the wall of rock, driving in at a long angle. As he roared in, the angle closed, with the sedan dragging between the plow and a wall of solid rock.

At the first, shearing impact the top crumpled. The sides buckled under a fountain of splintering glass.

The merciless fury of the big machine raced in Vander's blood. He felt like yelling.

"No mercy," he bellowed into the crashing tumult. "Yah, you punks, no mercy." And he slammed the throttle wide open.

The big plow hunched her shoulders and drove in like a lunging fullback. The sedan folded and the floor met the roof. Metal screamed and smoked along the rock.

He backed off finally, shaken with the fury that raced through him. His eyes flashed and his swollen lips lay back across bared teeth.

The sedan fell away from the cliff, a twisted, crumpled wreck so crushed and flattened that nothing larger than a weasel could have stayed inside and lived.

When Dugan came running up Vander snapped at him, "Get that service car up here. And don't tell me it's stuck."

The kid leaped away like a frightened rabbit. Vander swung and followed him down the road, plowing a wide lane. The kid rocked the car frantically, brought it out with a jerk. Vander dropped out of the cab, seized the wheel and roared back to the coupé. He backed up, flung his derrick chain under the coupé and raised the front wheels off the ground.

"Ride with me," he told the girl. "You'd never get home in this storm." He tucked her and the baby into the service car, trotted around and slid in behind the wheel.

Heat was already flowing back from the fan.

Dugan came puffing up, jerked open the door.

"Hey," he asked excitedly. "What about them guys?"

Vander gave him an odd look, half disgust and half pity. He reached out suddenly and laid his big paw on the baby's head.

"What'd they tell you," he rapped out, "when you asked 'em to lay off this little feller?"

Dugan gulped, his eyes widening with the memory of it.

"Uh—no mercy," he gasped.

"Yeah," Vander flung back at him. "Well—start plowing."

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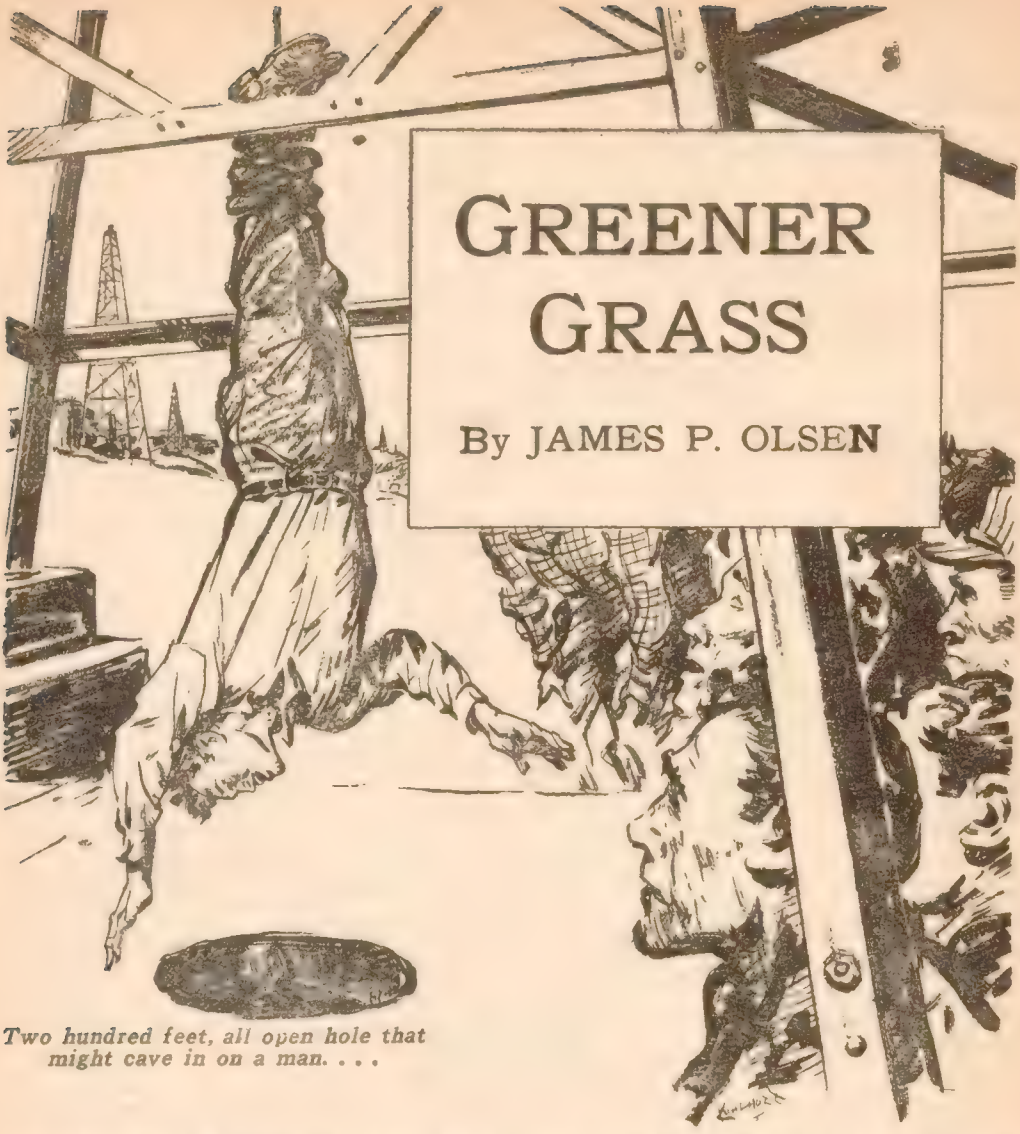

GREENER GRASS

By JAMES P. OLSEN

Two hundred feet, all open hole that might cave in on a man. . . .

THE MOLE came out of the lead mines at Pitcher, Oklahoma, and turned his broad, friendly face hopefully toward the boom hell of the new Mad Hope oil fields. For nearly three days he had waded red mud and thick red dust in turn, simply because it did not occur to the Mole to hop a truck or car and he didn't know it wasn't any oilfield custom at all to pull up and give a man a ride if he didn't yell and wave his arms for it.

It was raining and the rain was turning to sleet when the Mole stood on top of a hill and looked out over the mushroom town of Mad Hope, and at the blackjack flats, porcupine-studded with derricks beyond the town. Steam clouded into the air from the exhausts of the engines at a half hundred drilling wells and even at this distance, the Mole could hear the clang and clatter, hiss and puff and roll and grind that blended and boomed an unceasing song of the field.

The Mole's eyes brightened and his heart seemed to swell inside the bone-staved barrel of his chest. He was smiling as he shouldered his pack and went on down toward Mad Hope, a smile that was almost a benediction on the stinking sea of mud and filth, sheet iron and canvas and unpainted boards.

Later that day, he showed up at the

warehouse and office of the Oktex Oil Company, a mile or so out in the field, and happened to find Bill Heppner, the field superintendent, there. Experienced men were pretty hard to get right then and Heppner, who'd sworn by all salami in oilfield lunch buckets that he'd never hire another greenhorn or boll weevil, gave the Mole a job as a roustabout.

He walked across the office with his head back and his chest thrust out and turned his name into the timekeeper and warehouse clerk and immediately the clerk started crying to Heppner.

"Jan Molijaniciwz!" the clerk spluttered, spelling the name as well as mispronouncing it. "Migod, Bill, out of all the men in this field you might hire, you pick on him!"

He gave the Mole an aggrieved look, shaking his head. "You came out of the Pitcher mines, huh?" He looked back at the Mole's last name. "Well, from now on, your name is Moli—no, make it Mole. Jan Mole's the way you'll draw your checks."

The Mole chuckled. "Easier to write," he agreed.

Heppner showed him the bunkhouse and fixed his dog ticket up with the woman at the company boarding house. The crumb boss in charge of the bunkhouse came down to the bathhouse where I was soaking the mud off and the cold out of me before the gangs got in that evening.

"Stuff," the crumb boss said, "I got to put a fella in the room with you."

Not that I was a big boss, or anything like that. But, as a repairman, or trouble-shooter on gas engines, I did rate a few requests. Our bunkhouse was one long building with rooms down each side of a long, central hall, with two cots in each small room. I'd asked to be alone unless it was absolutely necessary to throw somebody in with me.

I dressed in a hurry, wondering what sort of boomer I'd drawn. I walked into my cubbyhole, then pulled up short. The Mole stood between the two cots, blinking down at me as though afraid I'd boot him out bodily. That made me want to chuckle. They called me Stuff, short for Short Stuff, me being blocky.

Come to find out, the Mole was worried about moving in on another man. I swept an accumulation of old tobacco sacks and matches and junk off half the homemade table between the beds and told him to make himself at home.

I noticed the few things the Mole had in an old cardboard suitcase were clean, and I didn't have to hint for him to go out and take a bath. After supper that night, the Mole went back to the room and I sat in a poker game. When I was ready to roll in, I wondered if I'd gotten into the right room. The Mole had cleaned up all the odds and ends I'd been letting pile up on me and the place was as clean as a new pin. The Mole was asleep on his back, a smile on his lips. In the twenty-six or so years he'd lived, I had a hunch he'd learned how to snore.

He never made a sound!

THE next morning, Bill Heppner assigned the Mole to big Ox Ardle's gang of roustabouts. One look at the Mole and I could see Ardle start swelling. Ox was the sort of big man with very little brain and he thought fame consisted of showing his bull strength above the strength of any other man. You could almost hear Ox thinking of some way to show he was a better man than the Mole.

Sleet was driving across the land and it was bitterly cold.

"If there aren't any wells off or down, get in a boilerhouse and stay until quitting time," Heppner told his gang-pushers.

A couple of gangs had bad luck and had to pull wells that day. Some of the others fared better. Ox Ardle's gang was one of them. They holed in a boiler house, yarned, dozed, played cards. I moaned up in my tincan tool car just before noon and took my lunch inside the boilerhouse.

I found things pretty tense. Ox, I learned from one of the roustabouts, had been riding Mole all morning and was working up to something, sure as hell. Finally, pushing aside his emptied lunch bucket, Ox got up and offered to one-hand any man there against the side of

the boilerhouse. Nice way to play.

I'd seen him push some pretty big men against the side of a building and hold them there helplessly, using only one hand. Nobody offered themselves as a victim, of course, and the Mole didn't know the score. Ox swaggered over and looked down at the Mole, who was sitting on a box.

"How about you?" Ox rumbled.

The Mole got up, not knowing what to do or say. I guess they never have time or maybe the place for horseplay around a lead mine.

"It's like this!" Ox grunted and cupped one hand under the Mole's chin. He shoved him back against the sheetiron side of the boilerhouse and the Mole's head hit hard enough to wobble a smoke-stack. Ox cramped the Mole's head back and turned to grin at the rest of us, wanting to be positive he was appreciated.

The Mole seemed to have gotten the idea by now. The next thing we knew, Ox was going backward the other way. He tripped over a boiler connection and would have fallen had not the Mole gripped the front of his jacket. Then, before anybody knew how it had happened, the Mole had Ox Ardle pinned against the opposite wall, holding him up with one hand so Ox's toes barely touched the ground.

"At first," said the Mole in his slow, thoughtful manner, "I do not understand. Is this all?"

I could have told him it wasn't all by the way Ox Ardle turned red and trembled and glared at the Mole. Ox knew that by nightfall, every man working for the company would have heard about this affair. Simple, surely, and childish. Men like Ox Ardle are simple and childish, though.

I said I had to have some help fixing a gas engine clutch on the next lease, and Ardle, thinking he was making it tough on the Mole, sent him along with me. There really wasn't any work to be done. I turned on a gas fire in an engine house as the Mole and I sat down to keep warm.

It was during that afternoon, while sleet hammered the sheetiron engine house and wind howled up in the derrick, that I learned a lot about the Mole. He'd left a bootful of brothers and cousins and uncles back around Pitcher. Always since he remembered, his folks had been miners. Some of them were in Pennsylvania, some in the Oklahoma coalfields, some in Kentucky, the rest in the lead mines.

"I think I do not care always to dig down in the ground like—" he grinned slowly—"a mole. I think of it for a few years now, and then I think I be an oil man. Up on top the ground I think it is much better. Someday, I perhaps will be a famous man in the fields."

I shook my head. Take days like today, for instance: Men were out in derricks, standing on boards slippery with ice and oil; they were wading mud, facing the storm, or huddled around engine and boilerhouse fires, waiting for the moment a pumper would report a well gone off production and they'd have to go out and take it; teams and trucks would be stuck in mudholes, and mighty few if any of them would be doing anything but swearing at this life and declaring themselves out of it as soon as they'd made a stake.

"The grass is always greener," I muttered.

He didn't understand me, or else he didn't hear.

THE storm still held the next day, and Ox Ardle and his gang had to pull the rods and tubing out of one of the best producing wells; no storm should be allowed to stop that work. I drove over and hung around, watching Ox and the Mole while I pretended to check the crank bearing for overheating. I was there on the derrick floor when Ox sent the Mole up to work the tubing board: a board laid across the derrick between fifty and sixty feet up.

In those days, there were no safety belts, no railings, no safety-caged ladders. The board on which a man worked was more often than not merely a two-by-twelve. To send a green man up when the rig and the board were covered with ice was a hell of a trick!

I saw the Mole lean back and look up into the derrick that hummed and shook

in the gale. He swallowed and started slowly toward the ice-covered ladder. One of the roustabouts handed him a hatchet with a, "Knock the ice off ahead of you as you go up." He drew a nasty look from Ardle for his deed.

I stood back and watched the Mole work his way slowly upward; he climbed carefully, awkwardly, and I groaned with pity. It was a near escape from falling from a derrick that had set me to studying the mulishness of gas engines; I knew I'd never be worth a hoot up in a rig any more.

The Mole climbed inside the derrick and set foot on the board. I knew how he must feel and I was sick in sympathy for him. The icy, greasy plank sagged beneath him and the wind up there was unhindered and smashed full blast at him. I saw him grip a girder and look up. A few storm clouds, below the slate gray of the rest of the sky, scudded along. Watching them dizzied a man and gave him the impression the derrick was leaning and falling the opposite direction in which the clouds scooted along.

Altitude ague seized the Mole.

It's something you can't shake, no matter how you curse yourself or try to let go of whatever you're holding to; I've seen men freeze to a girder or a tubing board and hang on until it took an entire roustabout gang to pry them loose and get them down—and those men weren't exactly cowards, either, and they'd been up before.

Taking a mining man out and sending him up in a derrick the first time under the worst conditions possible was a stunt that only a fool like Ox Ardle would pull.

I'm not going to describe any more of it. I stomached my own fear of climbing long enough to go up and talk the Mole into coming down. He was half frozen and sick at his stomach and his face was sort of green.

"No damned coward's going to mess up this gang!" Ox Ardle roared, setting the clutch and coming across the derrick floor. He shoved the Mole off balance and slapped him twice with his open palm. The Mole slipped and fell and groaned as he braced himself on his hands and knees.

"Get outta this rig!" Ox howled. "Go tell Heppner I don't want you within a mile of me."

I got the Mole in my work car and headed in to the office. Once I started to tell him not to mind. A look at his face and the misery showing in his eyes made me keep still. The Mole just didn't understand what had happened to him, and I figured it would be a long time until he smiled again—if ever. The Mole, in those mad minutes up in the derrick, had lost track of himself, as well as his confidence.

Heppner was at the warehouse. Before the Mole could say anything, I took Heppner aside. I hardly remember, now, what I said. Heppner cussed Ardle a little, but not really meaning anything. Ox Ardle was a pretty good man around a well, everything considered, and Heppner wasn't going to tie a can onto him right now.

"You're not canned if you don't want to quit," Heppner told the Mole.

I don't think the Mole knew what he wanted. He simply did not understand what had happened to him and he was completely lost.

"I don't quit," he mumbled.

Heppner considered a moment, and the outcome was that the Mole became a sort of a one-man roustabout gang. He dug drainage ditches around tanks, cleaned up piles of trash around on the leases; he did all the dirty work, in other words.

DURING the next two weeks, the Mole became more and more bewildered. He was shouldered roughly aside when he started into the boarding house and it got so he waited until everybody was out of the bathhouse before he went in. Silly, loud-mouthed fools whom he could have pinched off the vine with a thumb and finger, began shoving him around, calling him a hunkie and things not as nice as that.

No man with a trace of the coward in him ever would have faced what he did, especially with Ox Ardle riding him, cursing at him, dealing him misery and daring him to fight every time the Mole turned around.

Once or twice, at night, I started to try to talk to the Mole about the way he took off Ox Ardle. The Mole said once, "I do not understand yet," and closed up like a clam. I let it go. I wondered if he ever thought about being a famous man in the oil fields any more. . . .

I suppose if life was like books, the Mole would have saved Ox Ardle's life and made him admit Mole was the better man; or he'd have had occasion to have slapped Ardle's ears down and shown the field Ardle was a bluff. It wasn't like that at all.

The Oktex company was starting a test well on the Gryan Lease. They had no idea how deep they'd drill, so they started out with a twenty-four inch hole —which is plenty of drill hole in any man's oil field. They got down to about two-hundred feet, mostly open hole when the drive pipe got messed up and they pulled it. That left plenty of opening at the top where the drive pipe had jiggled back and forth.

Company officials decided to set pipe at that depth and go on with a smaller hole at that point, and the casing was being unloaded at the rig that morning when Bill Heppner drove up. When he pulled up and stopped, Ox Ardle and his gang rode up on a wagon and piled off to straighten the casing out on the rack. When the weather wasn't too bad, Bill Heppner lots of times rode Buster, his kid, around in the car with him; about three years old, the boy was at the lively age where it would take ten people full time to keep track of him.

I had stopped at a well that morning to pick up an old clutch I'd taken off an engine, and I had the Mole along to help me horse it around. I wanted to see Heppner about another engine we were having grief with, so I drove over where the casing was being unloaded at the test well.

I pulled up just in time to see men running into the derrick floor, not a one of them making a sound. They just ran with their eyes bugged out and their lips thin, colorless lines across faces that had turned a sickly, putty-colored gray.

I saw Bill Heppner struggle to get to the open hole and then he sank to his knees and began crying and praying.

"Buh-Buster," one of Ardle's gang chattered, his teeth clicking as he turned his stricken face toward me in answer to my question. "They yuh-yelled, buh-but it must've only scared the kid; he slipped an' went—oh, God!—down the big hole. Feet first, and he cried as he went down!"

Men stood around the opening in the floor and looked down into the awesome hole where the drive pipe went down. There wasn't a sound to be heard from down in there.

"We had 'er bailed almost dry," the driller almost wept. "It could be—he ain't dead—yet."

The thought didn't do anything to make anybody feel better, and they had to sit on Heppner to keep him from crawling over and going headfirst into the hole.

"If somebody could be lowered down the hole—" someone mumbled. Several of them looked at me, on account of my size. I shuffled up and looked down into that dark tunnel toward hell and my stomach began squeezing up inside of me. Two hundred feet, all open hole that might cave in on a man; hole in which he might become stuck, or where black damp could get him.

I couldn't do it and I knew it. Ox Ardle had been standing back. Sweat was pouring off him in streams as he moved up. He could not stop his teeth from chattering. "I'll try," he moaned.

"We can let you down with the sandline around your ankles," the driller said.

They laid the bailer down and cut the wire line loose. Ox Ardle sat down and they made hitches around his ankles. We stood back as the driller rolled his engine and pulled Ardle up. Ardle swung over the hole, looking down into cramped, stygian darkness, and he started vomiting.

"No!" he cried. "I can't. Let me down, for God's sake, let me down!"

ARDLE crawled back away from the open hole and hugged the floor after they'd untied the line. It was then that the Mole came over and sat down and raised his own ankles.

Nobody said a word as they made the hitches. They steadied the Mole as he hung suspended, head-down, above the big hole. He looked down, gave the driller an impatient, upside-down look and without the slightest quaver in his voice said, "Down!"

Slow foot by slow foot, not daring to let the Mole down swiftly, yet afraid to consume too much time, the line paid off the reel and into the hole. No sound down in there, nothing to be seen. Poor Bill Heppner was on his knees, his arms upraised as he beseeched his Maker in a choking kind of voice that made a man want to die.

The shaky driller stopped the payout, nodding at a bit of soft rope marker around the line. "He's down, and if he's into water or black damp—It's only about twelve feet to bottom; I can't let him down any farther without crushing him."

The line sort of wiggled, like the Mole might be jerking his body as much as possible in that earthern straitjacket binding him. The driller looked scared; his lips moved and he started out of the hole.

What would we find at the end of that line? A dead man and baby? A man and no baby? I think every second seemed a century, and Bill Heppner's voice became raw and cracked and rose to a shriek as the Mole's worn shoes, then his cable-wound ankles came out of the hole.

He was a strange, mud-plastered looking thing as he was hauled on up, gripping a smaller, muddy object in his big hands.

Heppner grabbed the baby just as the doctor from a field emergency station came driving up. The Mole lay flat on the derrick floor, his chest heaving, his breath rasping. Then he sat up and shook his head, wiping his muddy features on a piece of waste I handed him. Those features were quite sober until Heppner started yelling and running around like a maniac. Heppner waded into the slushpit, jumped up and down, shrieked and screamed that Buster would be all right. He came back into the derrick and I think he would have kissed the Mole's feet if the Mole hadn't risen, still a little dizzy and staggering from being upside down so long.

They finally got Heppner quieted down and he went off with the doctor and the baby.

Ox Ardle was standing off to one side, still looking sick, and sheepish, too. He looked at the open hole, then at the Mole, and now it was Ox Ardle's time to be unable to understand. The Mole grinned at him.

"Up there," he said, pointing up into the derrick, "I am afraid. But down there," he nodded toward the hole, "it is what I know. You do not."

Still Ox, the dumb oaf, didn't understand what the Mole was trying to tell him. The Mole laughed happily, for he had found himself.

He turned to me.

"If you will take me to the office, I draw the money I have coming to me," he said. And surprised me by adding: "The grass here is no more green for me than back in the pasture where I belong."

So the Mole went back to Pitcher. After all, he'd hoped to become famous in the oil fields, and so help me hell, he had!

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In spite of himself his finger had trembled on the trigger. . . .

WHITE HUNTER

BY PAUL ANNIXTER

IT WAS citizen Yurumi who really started things off that sweltering African afternoon.

The hour was a little past midday and the shadows of the flat-topped thorn trees were quite lost about their bases, when Yurumi decided suddenly on a change of venue. Beneath the grove of thorn trees was a cluster of five great ochre-colored ant-hills, and in and beneath these old Yurumi had been hanging about for nearly two weeks, gobbling up ants and honeycombing the earth below for several yards around.

There were scarcely two hundred ants left alive in that once great and thriving colony; however, there were some other anthills just as thriving out on the nearby plain—miniature mountains they looked at a little distance. The old aardvark couldn't see them; his mild little myopic eyes were mere apologies from long living underground, but he knew where they were all the same. His wonderful long gray pneumatic nose with its flickering red antennae of a tongue was in many ways like a radio receiving set, and his absurd mulish ears had a microphone keenness that could verily hear the work of ants underground.

It was frightfully hot, a little matter of 139° in the shade. The forenoon had

throbbed and pulsed as if with hot blood, and now one could feel the beginnings of that dreadful, blighting heat of mid-afternoon, heat that cracks the surface of the earth and causes queer sounds from time to time in the distant atmosphere. Humans are careful to stay under cover at this time and very few wild things stir aboard except on urgent business. For this reason Yurumi deemed it a good time to move.

For some minutes the tip of his flexible nose had been thrust into the open, winnowing the still air with a keenness second to no other dweller of the veldt. All seemed well. Except for the gray lauries, strange birds like winged mops that planed silently from tree to tree in the thorn scrub, the entire plain seemed dead.

With a heave the aardvark broke through the dry crust of the anthill. As he emerged, the dry earth falling away from him on both sides, he looked like one of Nature's unfinished forms stepped out of some steamy and by-gone age. And so he was, but a highly efficient and specialized citizen of that parched land of big thirsts for all that, and one of the most useful. For all his antediluvian brain and ways, he was built on a modern streamline design, his mild, long, foolish-looking face hanging down in front like another tail. And he was turret-topped, too, layer upon layer of interwoven hair, protection against the fierce red ants with which he did business.

Out into the open he moved at the clumsy, waddling gait of the digger, the delver in the earth, his great oversize claws, which had no contractile sheaths, rasping on the dry ground. There seemed no need for caution nor for hurry. Yet one there was who marked the very first movement of the aardvark as he broke ground.

The half-closed eyes of a great black-maned lion, drowsing in the shade of the thorns, four hundred yards away, opened to yellow moons of rapacity at the sight. He was an old lion and he was lame, long since past the prime of his speed and power. Therefore he was not above stalking as lowly a meal as an aardvark. He rose, crouched, and was not. Only something half seen, half guessed, came flowing with the ease of water through the tawny tinder-dry grass.

That stalk was a very miracle of self-effacing humility. And the aardvark's eyes were next to no good at all in open sunlight. Yet he sensed the lion's approach a hundred and fifty yards away. He couldn't turn back. He flung himself toward the nearest anthill on the plain in a clumsy, stumbling rush, the lion bounding after him like a charge of buckshot.

Halfway to his goal, Yurumi was flattened to the earth and the lion, with a horrible low snarling like water sucking down a big drain, began tearing at his back and neck. The aardvark would have lasted less than a minute under that attack had not the lion suddenly frozen stark at a fearsome sound. It was a tremendous whooshing and snorting as if a whale had risen to the surface of the sea and spouted. Then the earth's crust shook.

Sounds of the nearby scuffle and the taint of lion on the hot air had aroused the *Kifaru,* the great she-rhinoceros, from her midday sleep in the shade of the thorn bush. The rhinoceros hated lions; she hated all cats, in fact. Her temper, even at best of times, was the touchiest in all the veldt. Therefore, the first whiff of lion brought her up all standing. She snorted once, like a bull, and a second time like a locomotive, then charged.

The lion, with a rubbery backward leap so quick that it seemed like an ethereal dissolution rather than physical disappearance, vanished behind a thicket of wait-a-bit thorn. Head down, tail up, the *Kifaru* ripped through the dense bushes as scissors rip through canvas, coming on pole-true, following her nose. It is doubtful if she saw the lion at all as she came thundering up; she was quite as near-sighted as the aardvark and went almost entirely by scent. Certainly she didn't see the aardvark sprawled upon the ground, though her great-pile-driver feet missed the beast miraculously by a matter of inches as she pounded over the spot. Two hundred yards onward she rushed in the straightest of straight lines; then, as the taint of lion left her nostrils, she wheeled and came

snorting back, literally on end with rage.

The lion who had tarried for a moment, just in case, now melted into the denser brush like a wisp of tawny smoke, and the aardvark, shaken and very much unnerved, went scuttling away in the opposite direction. This time he gained his objective, the base of the nearest ant-hill, where, with half a dozen powerful scoops of his big curved front claws he disappeared from sight as if by magic into the soft earth of the great mound.

"ONE has tracked long and tracked far, *Bwana,* but at last succeeded. The great one lies fast asleep but an hour's march from here. Never has one seen a bigger animal and truly one is no longer a child. The rear horn is as tall as Bwana himself."

So reported Wafa, the black tracker, the following afternoon, to Follaston, the big game hunter for whom he worked. He squatted on the ground before the Englishman's tent, panting as if from a long run. He talked, presumably, to the air, looking at nothing at all. But of course Follaston knew he referred to the *Kifaru,* the great rhinoceros whose tracks he had noted for some days by the river bank. Follaston spoke, also to the air, using the native vernacular: "Appreciation over one's exertions."

He was really very much excited over the report. There seemed little doubt but that a rhinoceros of titanic proportions was soon to fall to his high-power rifle. Follaston had long dreamed of adding to his collection of trophies the head of a rhino of the "great white," or square-lipped persuasion, those giants of their kind which are never seen in a zoo or circus and which have become almost extinct in Africa. He had been camped in this vicinity for five days, waiting for this opportunity; however, it would not do to show a marked interest all at once.

"A long thin horn, one gathers. That would mean only a female. One had best wait, perhaps, and find a bull."

Wafa hitched an inch closer, panting even louder.

"A Missis, perhaps," he said, "yet of a size and a weight one has not seen for long and long, since one was a small child. And the horn—if the *Bwana* could see it he would be glad to pay even the whole of the reward promised."

Follaston remained impassive a little longer, outwardly dubious. He delighted in playing upon Wafa's transparent cupidity. He was really not particularly disappointed to learn that the big rhino that lived in the thorn bush was only "a Missis." True, he had offered a reward for word of the whereabouts of a rhino bull, yet he knew that in the square-lipped specie the cows were usually as vast as the bulls, their heads and horns quite as imposing and often more unique.

"We shall see what we shall see," he said finally. "But remember what happens to those who tell lies to me for the sake of the reward."

"I have seen rhinos and rhinos in my time, *Bwana,* but never such a cow as this one," said Wafa. He had dropped the stiff idiom of palaver, now that the hunt was really settled. He even forgot to pant.

Follaston was used to the tall exaggerations of the natives; nevertheless his blood was bounding swiftly. All his life he had hunted; he had followed the game trails of three continents and was far famed as a sportsman. There were few animals rare enough now to intrigue him and the great white rhino was one of these few. It really looked as if a long-held hope was to be realized today, out yonder in the thorn bush.

"Today," he said to Wafa, rising, "you will go with me as gun-bearer. Perhaps, since you hope for a reward, you will not run away, at least till after the first shot is fired."

"And the reward?"

"Shall be in proportion to the size of this wonder beast and its wonder horn. Go now and get the boys ready to march."

It was about two hours later that Follaston, with Wafa at his back and four boys to carry the head, entered the dense scrub where The Missis was sleeping. It was getting well on in the afternoon by now. Far more time had been squandered in getting under way than Follaston had thought necessary. In fact, everything about the details of this

hunt had been distinctly unpropitious, each preparation accompanied by unlooked-for obstacles. Danger gives birth to something like divination in outdoor men. No man who had followed the game trails as long as Follaston had done could have remained oblivious to such signs and augurs. But it was not until they were well into the bush that he saw that not only conditions but his men themselves were off-key today. Plainly all his porters were on edge and terrified about someone or something.

He didn't realize that the carriers knew about certain things of which he was ignorant. About the old black-maned lion, for instance, that inhabited the thorn bush and his grim reputation as a man-eater. And about the *mumbo* Missis herself, who had already killed two hunters with her great fifty-inch horn. The men were, in short, jittery and not to be relied upon at all. By all the precepts of the game Follaston knew he ought to wait for a more favorable time. But turning back from anything came hard to him. Besides, the hunting fever was really upon him now. So he ordered Wafa forward.

THE Missis was peeved. This was nothing unusual. She was sure to be out of sorts at any hour of the day or night one came upon her. But this afternoon she was at her touchiest, which meant that even her four guardian tick-birds could not get along with her. These canny birds—eyes, ears and curry-combs for their great hostess—had spent most of their lives perched on her back. They followed her exactly like whalebirds follow a whale, living off the ticks and other parasites that flourished in the folds of her thick wrinkled hide.

Today The Missis was so restless that the birds rose in clamant annoyance from her back and came to rest in a nearby tree. Ever since she had been roused from her sleep the afternoon before she had been stewing, so to speak, the one burst of temper only serving to waken a worse. This was the hour when she was usually sunk deep in heavy apoplectic sleep. Today, however, somnolence was far from her. She stood in the midst of a thicket of ergin, motionless except for the switching of her whip-like tail, outwardly unruffled, but dangerous as a Mill's bomb. Nearly two and a half tons of brainless brawn, just waiting for some little thing to touch it off.

There were numerous reasons for her anger. For one thing she felt something decidedly wrong with the bush today, something threatening, and not even the spotted hyenas were keener than she at sensing dark things that were to come to pass, for all her dull back-number brain. Then, like *Tartarin of Tarascon*, she had been hearing lions roar; all too long she had heard them. She hated lions and the smell of lions and in particular the deep reverberating roar the creatures made in their hunting, and their whiny snarls when they were hungry or baffled. And above all lions she hated the black-maned Lame One, who had come to haunt the dense thorn-scrub of this remote valley of hers, where she had lived for goodness and herself knew how many years, alone and supreme.

Until the lion's coming, some six months before, The Missis' rule had been undisputed here. She was monarch still, but in tenure only, her power quite undermined by the lion's high-handed piracy. Of course, there was no question as to who was the mightier of the two; always when the *Kifaru* came grunting and snorting through the dense scrub, it was the lion who turned aside, growling in a horrible sinister way among the shadows, as do all tyrants when they have to give way. For in his own realm amid the undergrowth and tall grass the lion was supreme, a duke in his own right, plying up and down the valley all night and part of the day, killing, filling the hot air with the odor of blood.

He grew bolder, it seemed, each day. As for The Missis, she grew angrier. But she waited. Oh, she waited, for someone or something to take her wrath out upon. This afternoon her vast body, half-masked in the thickets, looked lifeless as a great heap of earth, but her little pig-like eyes, set far down toward her nose, burned like red wicks of violence, and the oil they burned in was cunning and a deathless patience.

At intervals she would rip up shrubs and bushes out of sheer distemper, grunting deep in her throat and stamping her round pestle-like feet. Thrusting her horn well in under a bush that would have taken two men a half hour to cut out with axes, she would uproot it with a single heave of the head. Seizing it between vast hand-like prehensile lips, she would bang it once against the earth to knock off some of the larger clods adhering to the roots, then tuck it away for a minute or two between cavernous jaws, pulverizing roots, branches and spiny thorns alike.

Once she advanced pugnaciously into the bush, horn lowered, her dull little eyes trying to penetrate the shadows for the cause of the hated scent that had drifted to her nostrils, the scent of cat. But whatever it was—lion or leopard—it receded into the thickets, taking its obnoxious scent with it. As usual, nothing would come out in the open and do combat with her.

Finally, sheer boredom and the growing python-pressure of the heat were too much for her. She sank down in a patch of stunted elephant grass and fell into deep lethargic torpor.

WHEN a long-drawn rasping sound, like a saw being drawn through a particularly tough hickory log, advertised to all who had ears that The Missis slept, something came creeping stealthily upwind toward her. Presently a curtain of tinder-dry grass parted and a great black-maned head appeared. It was the Lame One himself, the lion that haunted the thorn scrub, and in the glare of his fierce yellow-notch eyes was a hate quite as savage as that of the rhino as he crouched there gazing at his enemy.

He had once been an exceedingly large and splendid specimen of his kind, but he was no longer such. It would be hard to explain just how, but this creature was somehow no longer like his wild kindred of the veldt. He was one of those cases of atavism that occur in the feline world. He had lost somehow his natural grace and symmetry; his majesty had simply gone from him as a flame goes. For an old lion or a lion that has gone lame has not the agility to procure his usual wild game. The injured limb makes it impossible to stalk with his former faultless silence, and the game is always too wary to be surprised by bunglers. So the Lame One had taken the line of least resistance; he had fallen by degrees to eating carrion and finally to stalking men. Very soon he had discovered that man, the forked upright creature whom the rest of the wild feared, was in reality the puniest and least protected of all forest things, unless moving in full armed companies. And this knowledge was now the basis of his craft and power.

He spent his days in the tall dense reeds and grass along the creek that flowed along the valley bottom. At night he sallied forth to visit the nearby native villages, and watch for unsuspecting dogs, pigs and humans. Old as he was, he was still a master hunter where man and his chattels were concerned.

But fortune did not always attend his hunting. Too often he went hungry for days, as he had of late. It was then that his irritable roaring, his harsh sawlike snarling stirred up the spleen of his rival, the great she-rhinoceros. It was then too that he was often led to shadow The Missis herself, and sometimes creep up close and watch her as he was watching her today, a wild feline tempest of craving and hunting-fever leaping in his veins until it shook his great body. He knew from old experience how rare and high a banquet was rhino meat, and today, with The Missis lying fathoms deep in sleep and utterly defenseless, it really looked as if he meant to risk all in a surprise attack. He was actually creeping closer inch by inch, when down the breeze came other tidings, news of game far more to his liking.

CLUTCHING the heavy emergency rifle that had been placed in his hands, Wafa led Follaston to a spot behind a line of huge ant-hills, then pointed to something huge and gray lying at the edge of a distant thorn thicket. It was the Kifaru lying deep in her afternoon sleep. Through the stillness one could hear, even at that distance, the harsh, unmusical sound of her snoring. She

slept like a thing without life, prone and insensible, her four tick-birds gathered in conclave on one mud-caked shoulder.

"The Missis herself," Follaston grinned as he studied the incredibly grotesque and ugly head, the great mouth gaping to show the blunt five-pound teeth. Even at that distance he knew that this beast was quite the mightiest he had ever seen and his blood began pounding with anticipation. For he was not unaware that The Missis was really almost the last of her dying breed left alive, that few big-game hunters in the past decade had been lucky enough to carry back to their homes or clubs such a trophy as the head of this great creature.
were many rhinoceros still left in Africa, vast creatures all, but not to be compared with a great white.

Follaston was already within fair rifle range, but he was too tried a sportsman to open fire at once. No vital spot was yet visible. He would maneuver until the head or shoulder of the sleeper was fully exposed. Ordering Wafa to keep close behind him, he moved upwind toward another anthill, scarcely a hundred and fifty yards from the quarry.

Even as the two men crouched behind the pyramidal mound, one of the four tick-birds uttered a harsh unmusical squeak. The Missis stirred and roused from her slumber. She rolled sluggishly in the cushion of her own flesh, then went to her feet with the startling abruptness that characterizes all rhinos' movements. The great head turned, the horn pointing directly toward the hunters.

Cautiously the barrel of Follaston's rifle was thrust over the top of the anthill, its gold-beaded foresight seeking the vital spot just back of The Missis' tree-like foreleg.

Old Yurumi, who had been burrowing diligently beneath that anthill since the afternoon before, had become as rankly dissatisfied with this new habitat as he had been with the old. This particular anthill had already been practically decimated by ant warfare, disease or some other ant-eater, and the idea of one of Yurumi's proven capacity, capable of doing business with some five thousand ants a minute, wasting his time on a depopulated hill was indeed silly. So the old aardvark decided for the second time in twenty-four hours to vacate.

Gone long since from his sluggish brain was the memory of the lame lion and the death he had barely escaped the day before. He listened for a time close to the surface to ascertain what was doing outside the mound. All seemed quiet. But a minute later, as Yurumi broke cautiously through the outer shell of the hill, his marvelous nose told him that something living was crouching directly beside the mound. For a moment he had a recurrent shock of terror. However, it was not a lion that crouched there, nor was it any of the other killers of the veldt he feared. The strange creature, whatever it was, remained motionless, and just what it was he could not tell. Finally, without misgiving he thrust his long pliant nose well into the open to see what it would tell him.

As he did so there was a thunderous roar just above him and Yurumi, outraged and horrified, burrowed downward to the deepest chamber beneath the anthill and lay there, quaking.

SEASONED hunter that he was, the thrill of the moment had made Follaston oblivious to everything save the fact that facing him there in the thorn bush was at last a "Great White", a rhinoceros whose gigantic head would make the rarest prize of all the specimens that hung in his famed trophy room. In spite of himself his finger trembled on the trigger as he carefully fastened his foresight upon the vital spot behind The Missis' foreleg. Small wonder it was that the slight scratching sound in the anthill just beside him went unheard.

Just as his aim steadied and his finger began its squeeze upon the trigger, something grayish and squirming reared up out of the mound directly beside him. In spite of himself Follaston jumped.

His movement prematurely contracted the muscles of his trigger finger and with a loud slapping report the high-power rifle spoke. The aim was deflected, the soft-nosed bullet merely tearing through the padded hump of flesh above The Missis' shoulder.

In spite of her tremendous bulk the rhinoceros leapt from complete rest into full charge all in a flash. She had gone "rusty", as Englishmen say, turned into two and a half tons of furious destruction, coming straight on.

His nerves stiffening instantly to the emergency, Follaston dropped the rifle he held and his hand whipped back swiftly for the second weapon held by his gun-bearer. Vainly he groped for it in an arc, then turned with an oath to find that he had no gun-bearer. Wafa had flung away the weapon he held and was in full flight for the shelter of the nearest thorn trees.

It was a ghastly moment. There are few more fear-inspiring sights in the world than the full charge of a rhino.

Follaston was a nerveless man as hunters go, but in those breathless moments his every reflex clamored to his brain to turn and run. However, this was not the first time he had faced a rhino's charge, and he had learned from experience that the safest thing to do was to lie still and hold the breath. A rhinoceros' vision rates about C-minus and unless he aims very true at the outset he usually misses his target. For in the full charge he never swerves in his course.

Follaston crouched still. In the very nick of time he flung himself aside at the base of the anthill as the monster pounded up and past, so close that flying dirt from the great feet stung his face. He knew that the animal would go lunging on in impotent fury for two or three hundred yards at least before turning, and he had seen the heavy rifle which Wafa had dropped lying at the edge of a thicket a hundred yards away. Follaston went to his feet, and instead of running for the shelter of the distant trees, he sped straight across the open for the rifle, running fast and low.

He reached the weapon just as The Missis veered about at the end of her charge, literally on end with rage now, ramping and screaming like all the pig pens of the Chicago stockyards. She could not see Follaston at that distance, but most certainly she scented something. Head and tail up she came quartering across the plain at her patent India-rubber, steam-press jog. She paused, head lowered almost to the ground, then came on, looking vast and strange and grotesque beyond belief.

Then Follaston did a mad thing, a thing which few of the oldest and most seasoned Africanders had ever done and lived. Rifle in readiness, he backed slowly to the edge of a thicket of khansi and stood waiting the renewed charge. His rage and humiliation over the flight of his men was one reason for his act. Then too, he had had a close up vision of The Missis' wonderful head and horn and he knew that an opportunity like this might never again come his way.

Back and forth The Missis tacked, first to the right, then to the left, grunting and snorting, for that bullet under the hump was rankling on the monster mind as well as in the monster carcass. Her heavy legs moved in great strides and a terrific momentum was gathering behind her. Follaston followed her with his rifle barrel, knowing it was suicidal to fire the single shot that remained until the perfect moment presented itself. Two hundred yards away, and he saw that the dull little eyes of the brute were still unable to make him out, at least as a living thing. Once she swerved off so far into the thickets that he thought she had gone past returning, and he smiled grimly as he lowered his weapon. But he would not have smiled had he been aware of the long tawny form that was creeping silently toward him through the undergrowth, scarcely a hundred yards behind him.

There followed a queer and breathless moment in which everything seemed to hang at pause. It was that definite moment of late afternoon in which the heat begins to lift and the first cooling breath of sunset breeze draws like a benizen across the veldt. It drew gently across Follaston's damp brow and on up the valley toward the vast gray form that was stamping back and forth in the thickets. And in that same instant the old rhino charged.

NOW, as has been intimated, The Missis was a couple of hundred yards inside the dense bush and it would have taken a man some twenty minutes to make his

way out of that close-packed cluster.

The Missis did the distance in ten seconds flat. She came with a really incredible speed; her great form seemed literally to bound over the ground with the power and might of a runaway freight train. Follaston heard the sounds of riven wood, saw the thick bushes on either side of her swept apart like straws in a gale.

He thought, of course, that her charge was meant for him, yet he could see as she came on that she was going to miss him by a number of yards. Perhaps it was this, perhaps it was sheer intuition, that caused Follaston's glance to whip aside instead of concentrate along his rifle barrel in that pigeon-holed moment. The picture he glimpsed out of the corner of his eye was something that all the vistas and experiences of after life could never obliterate. Half masked in the brush, actually within leaping range, was the long, low body of a black-maned lion. Its pale yellow eyes holding him with a basilisk fixity. The rifle leapt round in his arms, gleaming steel itself, his shot sounding without perceptible pause for aim.

Practically in the same instant the lion leaped. He was too close to his prey by then to turn back if he would. The wild lust of hunting was leaping in his veins, an insatiable feline madness that made him oblivious of even the oncoming rhino. As Follaston flung himself aside following the shot there was the shock of heavy bodies meeting behind him. Sprawling as he was on the ground, the picture was no less clear to him. He saw the lion flung high in air by a single toss of The Missis' head, spitted neatly as be damned by her long curving horn. Follaston saw him come down, snarling and striking out in all directions. Ensued a moment of stupendous conflict, half hidden in the thickets, as the spark of the lion's savage life was trampled out. By that time Follaston was running, like the veriest tyro that had ever come out from the homeland, for the safety of the nearest trees.

Bruised and lacerated, with not an instant to spare, he swung himself up into a scraggly thorn as The Missis came sweeping up beneath him. For a long time thereafter while he clung to his high perch, The Missis put on a pantomime of mayhem and murder below, that made the man quake from the sheer reflex of her fury. She ramped and screamed and ripped up the thickets and flattened them beneath her pestle-like feet. But as Follaston watched, a queer look of delight—surprising, considering his predicament—shone on his face. He was seeing the whole episode of his hunt for the head of The Missis from a clubroom angle as he would assuredly retain it in months to come, and suddenly he yelled aloud with laughter. He didn't know, of course, about the prolonged feud between The Missis and the old lame lion that was settled now, once and for all; nor did he know that it was merely the nose of an old aardvark that had spoiled his aim by the anthill that afternoon. But he did get the import of these things, and he did a lot of thinking one way and another as he waited for the rhino's wrath to cool. He had had ample warning that the gods of hunting affairs were not smiling on this venture of his; he had gone directly against the whisper of instinct when he decided to carry on the hunt alone. Miraculously he owed his life to the great blundering creature below him and somehow he knew, the episode marked the end of a long hunting trail.

An hour passed before The Missis stopped and stood for a space looking away into the distance, her tall front horn seeming to point. Then with characteristic abruptness she went lunging away into the thorn scrub. Follaston waited until the sound of her going had quite died away; then, extricating himself from his prickly perch, he descended to search for his gun. Behind the western hills the sun was already sinking.

Follaston went, and when he too had disappeared and all was silent roundabout, old Yurumi once more thrust his gray pneumatic nose into the open to begin a second journey to an anthill more to his liking. Of course, neither he nor The Missis knew it, and being one and part of Nature they didn't need to, but each had played a vital role that afternoon in the balancing of wilderness affairs.

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(Continued from page 79)

A SLOW flush began at the base of Chapman's throat and worked up into his face. This was a new Alan Vickers. He was showing claws that had been sheathed before.

Chapman said curtly, "I'm sorry, Mr. Vickers. I can't speak for the others. I wouldn't, if I could. As for myself—"

"Wait!" Vickers cut in sharply. "Before you answer I want you to know the alternative."

"Yes?"

Vickers cleared his throat bruskly. "The alternative is extinction. I mean that, Chapman. Up to now, we've stepped around gently, because we haven't wanted to tread on the gentle Confederate toes. I've been out there in your country. I know that everyone's secretly for you. They aid and abet you, because they think you're fighting Yanks. They're wrong and you know it. That's why I'm telling you now what's going to happen—"

"Will you stop the carriage?" Chapman said coldly.

Vickers gripped Chapman's arm in a hand of steel. "Hear me through. I've got the biggest detective organization in this country. I've got offices in twenty-two cities. Two hundred men work for me full time and I can hire five hundred more any time I want. Even today people don't know what our organization did during the war. Did you know we had three men inside Pemberton's lines at Vicksburg? Did you know there were Vickers men with Lee in Virginia? Why, I even had a man on the staff of Joe Johnston!

"I've got good men, Chapman. I haven't used them so far. But I'm going to now. The railroads are desperate and they insist on results. I'll go so far as to tell you that they've given me an ultimatum. And loss of their contracts would just about ruin me financially. This is a life and death matter with me, too. By God, Chapman, you come in or I'll turn my entire organization loose on you, every man who carries a Vickers badge!"

"I'll think it over," Chapman said.

Vickers' mouth opened and closed for a moment like that of a fish out of water. "You don't believe me!"

"I do believe you. I don't think I ever under-estimated you, Mr. Vickers. It's just that—I want to think it over a while."

Vickers shook his head in despair. "Then I've got to play my last card. I'd hoped I wouldn't have to do it."

He sawed on the reins and made a complete U turn in West Madison Street. Chapman's hand came swiftly across and touched the lapel of his sackcloth coat.

"Where are you going?" he demanded.

"Downtown. Oh, it's all right. I gave my word. You're in no danger. I just want you to see someone."

"No," Chapman said. "You can let me out here."

"This person," said Vickers, deliberately, "is someone you know. I brought her here for this purpose. Her name is Evelyn Comstock."

For a moment Chapman held his breath. Then he let it out slowly. "What do you know about Evelyn Comstock?"

"I told you my organization is a big one." Vickers laughed shortly. "I saw the letter you wrote to Martin Halliday before he saw it, Chapman. I could have come to Kansas City then and taken you. I didn't want to. I made a small mistake. I thought when she went to you that she could win you over."

THEY passed Philip Castlemon, still driving westward. Chapman stared at the flimsy false - fronted stores along Madison. He said: "What else do you know?"

"I know that you and all your men have spent the entire winter in Clay County, that you've been going openly from place to place, that you've slept in the brush very few nights. Oh, don't worry about that. There are no traitors among your friends. I'm just trying to tell you that I know what's going on. And as for Miss Comstock, she is a remarkable girl. She would marry you, even now, if you gave it up."

"What good would that do?" Chapman asked dully. "If I went to prison for fifteen years—"

"You're twenty-one," Vickers said crisply. "You're still a boy. In ten years—and it wouldn't be more than that—you'd still be young. She would wait."

Yes, he was only twenty-one. But five of those years had been lived during a war. A year of such war was ten years in ordinary life. Chapman was old, as old as Alan Vickers.

"Where is she?" he asked suddenly.

"At the Palmer House. I sent a message over the moment I got Castlemon's. She's waiting."

She was sitting on a mohair sofa when they entered her room. She got up when she saw Chapman. Her mouth was open and there was a frightened look in her eyes.

"Evelyn," he said thickly.

Her eyes went to Vickers. The detective shook his head. "It's up to you, Miss Comstock."

Chapman said: "Mr. Vickers thinks I should surrender. He assures me that I can get off with ten or fifteen years at the most."

Pain and shock twisted her face.

"Oh, no!" she cried. "You couldn't. It would—it would kill you."

Alan Vickers exclaimed in surprise, tinged with anger. "It won't hurt him. Ten years isn't much. He's young."

"But you don't understand," Evelyn protested. "Someone else, perhaps not. But Jim—Jim would die locked up. You—you didn't tell me this."

Chapman stared at her, fascinated. He had actually known her so few minutes. How had she come to understand him? How could she know that that was true what she said—that he would never survive ten years in a prison? He looked at her and the hot blood throbbed in his temples.

Alan Vickers groaned. "It's going to be war, then, Chapman?"

Chapman did not reply. He said, to Evelyn Comstock, "Thanks."

A smile quavered on her lips. Suddenly Alan Vickers was not with them, the room in fact, disappeared. They were alone, as alone as if they had met in the Missouri brush. Chapman took

a step forward and then she was in his arms, sobbing and trembling.

For a long moment they stood like that and then Vickers' voice came to them, as if from a great distance.

"Good-by, Chapman. You have twenty-four hours."

Chapman heard the door open and close and then he released Evelyn.

"It's going to be hell," he said softly. "You'll never have a home. And some day—some day they'll—"

Her hand touched his lips to stop the words. "I don't care. I'll go with you . . . anywhere."

They were married an hour later. Clem Tancred, big, bewildered Clem, went with them to the minister's residence on West Adams Street. He followed them to the train, where Chapman placed Evelyn in a seat by the window. Clem went outside then and waited ten minutes, until the train began moving and Chapman dropped off.

He looked at Chapman's tight face and sighed heavily. "Now what, Jim?"

Chapman shook his head. Tersely he told Clem of his talk with Alan Vickers, the latter's ultimatum. Clem gasped, when Chapman finished.

"And you married her just the same?"

"I married her," Chapman said savagely. "They may get me, but I'll have that. I've never had anything in my life before, but I have now. I'm going to strike the first blow, too, a blow they'll never forget. Maybe they'll come to my terms, then."

Clem stared.

"It isn't the banks," Chapman went on. "Vickers is working for the railroads. They're the ones that are after us. All right, we'll give the railroads something to think about."

"What are you going to do, Jim? You can't—"

"I can. Send a telegram to your cousin in Harrisonville. I don't trust them at Freedom. Have him ride to the boys at once and tell them to meet us in Omaha. We're going to stop the Union Pacific train!"

CHAPTER XI

NO ROAD BACK

THE agent in the red-painted little station on which the name *Cedar Hill* had been stencilled in white letters, leaned back in his arm chair and put his feet upon the table containing his telegraph instruments. Outside the wicket, three or four local farmers talked idly about the condition of the winter wheat and the possibilities of a good corn crop.

The agent was waiting for the eastbound passenger train to clear through Cedar Hill, after which he could lock up the depot and go home. Another ten minutes. He yawned.

The door of the waiting-room opened and three men entered. One of them came directly to the wicket opening into the agent's cubicle.

The agent turned his head curiously, and his chair crashed over backwards.

"Get up, with your hands in the air!" curtly ordered the man at the window. The huge Navy Colt in his fist reflected the light from the hanging lamp above.

In the waiting-room, the farmers were standing, ashen-faced, with their hands raised. Two more men came into the station. Like the previous ones, they wore linen dusters and carried revolvers.

One of them pushed in the door of the agent's room and roughly shoved the agent to one side. He brought a pair of wire-cutters from the pocket of his duster and began cutting wires on the telegraph instrument. He wound up by throwing the key to the floor and jumping on it.

Finished with that task, he said, to the agent: "Get out now and set your signals to stop the train."

"But I can't," the agent chattered. "It only stops here when there are passengers. The rules—"

The bandit thrust his revolver under the agent's nose. "Here are your rules!"

Chapman was standing alone on the platform when Ed Sugrue came out with the agent. He nodded.

The agent set his signals, then, under Sugrue's direction, got three or four lanterns and lit them.

Chapman said: "Lock them up inside, now. The whole bunch of them. Then you'd better climb up the pole there and cut the wires, just to be safe."

Dick Wood had caught the horse job today and was back in the thicket a hundred yards. The other six outlaws posted themselves on both sides of the tracks. They held lanterns under their dusters, so the lights would not show too soon to the train crew.

THEY were ready when the long beam of the searchlight cut the darkness about them. The engine whistle blasted twice and the wheels of the train began grinding on sand. The engine came to a stop, directly opposite the station. Chapman swung up on the fire platform from the left side. At the same moment, Clem Tancred's broad face appeared opposite.

"This is a holdup," Chapman said grimly to the fireman and engineer.

The engineer blinked in astonishment. "Holdup. Wh-what for?"

"For what's in the express car,"

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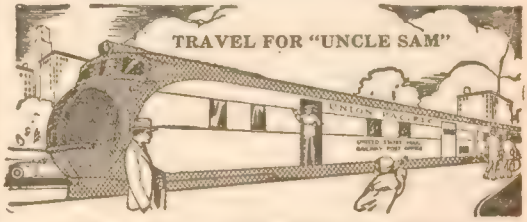

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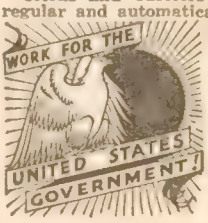

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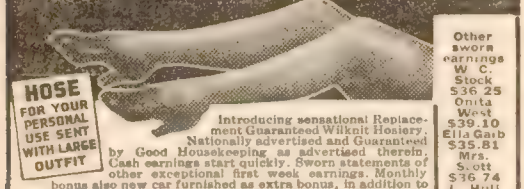

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snapped Clem Tancred. "Come on—climb down to the ground."

The trainmen obeyed and the outlaws followed. Dan Tancred and Hutch Tompkins were already pounding on the door of the express car.

"Open up in there!" cried Hutch.

Down by the passenger coaches, men began jumping to the ground. The engineer, a small revolver in his hand, was running toward the bandits, shouting, "Here, here, what's going on here?"

Ed Sugrue laughed and fired his revolver over the conductor's head. That gentleman immediately dropped his little pistol.

Chapman called to the conductor. "Come here, you. Tell the express messenger to open up his door, or we'll put dynamite under the car."

His knees knocking together, the conductor approached. "Quincy!" he called. "You'd better open up. They—they're armed."

A rifle bullet tore through the door of the express car.

"All right, boys," said Chapman. "Put the dynamite under the car."

They had no dynamite, but for a moment or two Hutch and Dan scrambled around under the car. They bumped a wheel, tapped on the bottom of the car. Suddenly the express messenger called:

"If you won't kill me, I'll open up."

"Open up," replied Chapman. "We haven't killed anyone yet. Throw your rifle out first, though."

The door was slid open a few inches and a Winchester thrown out. Then the messenger opened the door wide. Chapman gestured him down to the ground; then he and Clem Tancred climbed into the car with their lanterns.

Clem headed for the registered mail pouches. "The hell with them," Chapman said. "What we want'll be in the safe. Call that messenger in here."

When the messenger climbed back into the car, white-faced, Chapman said to him, "Now, Quincy, you're a loyal employee of the express company. They pay you a good salary, but no salary is big enough for you to give your life for the railroad company. Is it—"

"N-no, sir," replied the messenger.

"Good, then find your key and open up that safe."

Terror split the messenger's face. "I—I can't, sir. That's a through safe. They've got the key for it in Chicago."

Clem Tancred thrust a Navy at the man's head. "Open it before I count three."

The messenger fell to his knees and Chapman waved Tancred back. "I think he's telling the truth. Well, next time we'll have to bring that dynamite after all. See if you can't find something to break the thing open."

Clem began tearing up the express car. After a couple of minutes' search, he came up with an axe. He smashed it against the door of the safe and the axe ricocheted off the iron door and sunk itself into the wooden wall of the car.

Clem cursed and began yanking at the handle. His big shoulder brushed a pile of boxes beside the safe and the top box fell down and barked Clem's shin. He yelped in pain and kicked the offending box viciously.

It bounced to Chapman's feet. He started to brush it aside, then exclaimed: "Hold on, Clem!"

He stooped and hit the thin boards of the box, already split, with the barrel of his Navy Colt. The board splintered and Chapman reached in and pulled out a sheaf of green paper.

"I think this is what we want, Clem," he said, in a strained voice.

"Yow!" Clem cried. He turned and grabbed another of the boxes. Instantly he swore. "No, this is too heavy." He hurled the box to the floor. It broke open and a shower of gold coins spilled over the floor.

"Gawd!" he cried.

Chapman walked to the door of the train. "Dan—Hutch, come in here. We need some help."

THERE was only the one box of paper currency, but there were four of gold coin and another of silver. Chapman estimated the value of the silver box and decided against it. Too heavy, for what it was worth.

They broke the boxes open and dumped the contents into two wheat sacks. They were so heavy a man could scarcely carry one.

Outside, Chapman fired twice into the air to apprise Dick Wood of the completion of their task. The whole thing had occupied fifteen minutes.

Chapman said to the engineer: "Get into your cab and pull it up two miles. We're going to go through the passenger cars and if you come back inside of a half hour, some of the passengers are going to get hurt."

The fireman uncoupled the engine from the rest of the train and the engineer climbed into his cab and started off with the engine. The moment the engine was out of sight around a bend, Chapman turned to his men. "All right, boys, let's beat it. This'll give us a little start."

A hundred yards away they found Dick Wood with the horses, almost a nervous wreck from the suspense. "It go all right?" he cried.

Then he saw the heavy wheat sacks and whistled.

Ten miles from the scene of the Cedar Hill train robbery the seven outlaws spread a blanket on the ground and counted the proceeds. It was a stunning amount.

One hundred and two thousand dollars!

Soberly, Chapman divided the money. "There's going to be hell about this, even in Clay County. I don't think any of us ought to go there for a long while. You know the code; keep in touch that way, but be careful. We oughtn't to get together for six months at least. During that time—be careful, fellows."

TWO days later, Chapman, wearing a swallow tail coat and a tight-fitting derby hat, got off the train at the little German village of Waverly, in north-central Iowa. He had reached the town by a roundabout route, from western Iowa cutting straight across the state and embarking on a northbound steamboat. At Dubuque he had got off and changed to a westbound train.

According to Chapman's reasoning, no one would look for a former Confederate soldier in a German Republican strong-

The fat man's pair of thugs went into action.

hold. But when he looked down the amazingly broad street, lined with trees and saw the freshly painted stores and houses, a strange feeling of peace came over him.

This town was new and clean. As he walked down the street he could almost believe that the wooden sidewalks had been scrubbed that day.

There was a two-story frame hotel a block from the river. It had a sign outside, *Vogel's Hotel, Rooms and Board.* Chapman went into the clean little lobby and a stout, middle-aged woman got up from a rocking chair in which she had been knitting.

"*Guten Morgen,*" she said.

"Good morning," Chapman replied. "I wonder if I could get a room for a week or two. A large room, for my wife will be coming from Chicago in about a week."

"*Ja*, sure. *Naturlich*," said Mrs. Vogel. "Berhaps you would like two rooms togedder. Mit meals, I can give dem for you for ten dollars."

"That would be splendid. My name is John Simmons. I am thinking of buying a farm around here."

"A farm?" exclaimed Mrs. Vogel. "*Ach*, you have gome to the right place. Farms is so goot here. Rich eart'. You talk to Mr. Vogel when he gome home at noon. But now I show you your rooms."

Chapman walked about the village later. At the railroad station he saw a bundle of newspapers thrown from a train and followed the bundle on the shoulders of a stalwart youth to a tobacco store up the street.

He bought a pouch of tobacco, and on his way out pretended to notice the newspapers and bought one. He rolled it up casually and stuck it under his arm. He strolled about town a few minutes more, then went to his rooms.

Eagerly he spread out the papers and winced when he saw the headlines:

"Railroad Offers $25,000 Reward For Jim Chapman
Most Spectacular Robbery in History.
Quarter Million Dollar Bandits
Sought in Missouri. Alan
Vickers Declares He Will
Make Arrest Soon

Chapman started to read the details of the story, but a phrase in italics leaped from the page. *Dead Or Alive*, it read. He read the account and a fine film of perspiration came to his face. Vickers was out to fulfill his ultimatum issued in Chicago. A telegraphic dispatch from Kansas City, printed on page two, told of a hundred detectives, armed with shotguns, rifles and revolvers invading Clay County from the west. They were determined, the dispatch said, to get the bandits and quell out-lawry in The Outlaw State, once and for all. The detectives, were being reinforced by a company of soldiers under the command of Major Peterson, the provost marshal at Freedom.

Finished reading, Chapman stared at

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the paper for a long time. There was no mention in it anywhere of Evelyn Comstock. Surely, Vickers knew. He must have followed Chapman's trail in Chicago. Why then, was he withholding that information? Had he learned that Evelyn had not gone to St. Louis? That she got off the train at Springfield and from there went to Indianapolis?

Were Vickers men following her now?

Would she bring them to Waverly, Iowa, on her roundabout trip to this rendezvous?

HE WAS still thinking about it when Mrs. Vogel tapped on his door and announced that lunch was ready downstairs. At the table were a half dozen townsfolk. Also Mr. Vogel, a fat German with amazingly long mustaches.

"My wife tells me you are looking for good farm, Mr. Simmons," he said to Chapman. "My brother-in-law has farm he vould like to sell. He is getting old and vould like to moof to the city. Is very fine farm. You like to see?"

"Why, yes," said Chapman. "I'd like very much to see it." And all the while he was thinking, what's the use? I'll only have to move on again.

Yet, when Mr. Vogel came around to the hotel with a rig, he climbed in beside the German and rode with him two miles east of the town. There, Vogel turned in toward a white-washed stone house, a house with a broad veranda. Nearby were white-washed barns and outbuildings and an orchard of apple trees.

Chapman looked at the farm and compared it mentally with the scrubby Clay County land. He shook his head when a man who could have been an older brother of Martin Vogel instead of a brother-in-law came out of the house and wiped his hands on his clean overalls.

"Mr. Simmons," said Vogel, "this is Johann Mueller. Johann, Mr. Simmons vants to buy a farm."

The farmer's eyes lit up. "*Ja!* Then you buy this one. It is eighty acres and almost half of it cleared land. The voods is fine for pasture. I have three goot horses, one of dem for the buggy. There is two cows and eighteen pigs.

Chickens and twelve goose. I sell every-t'ing, mit the machinery and all—seven t'ousand dollars. You pay me one t'ousand dollar cash and the bank gif the mor'gage for the odder. . . .?"

"Why," said Chapman, "my uncle in Ireland left me a little money, but I won't get it for a few more weeks. However, I can pay three thousand dollars now."

As quickly as that Chapman bought a farm. They drove into Waverly and the papers were signed and Chapman paid Johann Mueller three thousand dollars.

When they left the bank, Mueller said: "I am moofing Saturday. Already I have rented house in Waverly."

The next morning, Chapman received a letter. It said, merely: "Dear Husband: I will arrive Sunday morning by train. Love, Your wife."

Chapman went out to the farm on Thursday. Mr. and Mrs. Mueller showed him around the place and then summoned a man from a neighboring farm, a lumbering youth named Hans Schnabel. Chapman hired him.

He remained on the farm and saw the Muellers off in the farm wagon on Saturday. It was piled high with their personal possessions, although they had sold the meager furniture along with the house and farm.

Chapman slept in the farmhouse alone that night. It was long before he went to sleep, however. He did not know what the morrow would bring. Evelyn, yes, but what else?

He was a married man, now. Married a week and he had placed his bride on the train an hour after the ceremony. He had known her perhaps a half hour altogether in the months since he had first met her.

As a child she had gone through the chaos that was Order No. 11, but she had lived a sheltered life in recent years. How would she react to the sort of life Chapman could give her?

IN THE morning, he got Hans to harness the buggy horse to the rig and drove to Waverly. He was at the depot a half hour before the train came in, yet when it finally chugged to a stop, he stepped away, to one side of the station.

His eyes darted along the cars. An elderly couple got off; a woman with a child, then a man in overalls and a heavy-set man in a business suit. Chapman's eyes remained on the last man, so that Evelyn had stepped down from the steps and was standing on the platform looking about for him, before he caught sight of her.

He took a deep breath then, and walked toward her. She gave a glad cry when she saw him and came instantly into his arms. He kissed her, but his eye was still on the heavy-set man. He gathered up her bags and boxes that the porter set down on the platform, gave the man a dollar and with a glance over his shoulder hurried to the rig, beside the depot.

Scarcely had he helped her in and climbed in himself, than he said, "That heavy-set man who got out before you—"

She exclaimed, softly: "What man? I didn't notice."

"Turn around," he said, grimly. "The man in the black broadcloth suit."

Wonderingly, she obeyed, then exclaimed softly. "Why—he's a minister. He got on the train at Oelwein. I heard him talking to the conductor. They don't all wear the turned collar."

Relief flooded through Chapman. Relief so great that he actually became garrulous. "I bought a farm, Evelyn. It's the cleanest, neatest farm you ever saw. Not at all like the Missouri farms—"

"I'll love it, Jim," Evelyn said, quietly. "I told you in Chicago I'd go whereever you went. Only . . . don't leave me again. I don't think I could stand it."

Looking straight ahead, he asked, "You've read about Cedar Hill?"

She bowed her head, slightly. "I'd rather not talk about that—now."

He laughed suddenly. "Look at this town. Did you ever see one laid out like this, with such ridiculously wide streets? And look at those trees on each side. But wait—wait until you see the farm. You've never seen anything—"

She responded instantly to his cheerfulness and before they had cleared the village her hand was on his arm and she was laughing.

CHAPTER XII

THE LAW OF THE HUNTED

IN THE winter of 1876, a man named Darlington, who had never been west of Philadelphia, wrote in *Harker's Magazine* an article entitled: "Bad Men of the West." Among other things the article ventured the astonishing assertion that Jim Chapman was not a man at all, but a name applied to many men.

"We know there is a Wild Bill Hickok, because we saw him in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. We know there is a Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson, because these men are actively engaged as peace officers in that Bibulous Babylon of the Plains, Dodge City. We know there are outlaws like Rudabaugh, killers like Clay Allison and John Wesley Hardin, because they have been seen. But who has ever seen Jim Chapman?

The men he has held up and robbed? Bosh! Robberies there have been—many of them. Trains are held up, banks robbed of fabulous amounts. But who has committed the crimes? Jim Chapman . . . or twenty different men in twenty different localities? Jim Chapman holds up a bank today in Virginia, tomorrow, he robs a train in Iowa and on the same day he is just as liable to be killing a man in Kentucky or shooting up a town in Missouri.

Is he man or devil, this Jim Chapman? *Or is he merely a legend?*

Everyone knows that John Wilkes Booth was killed in Virginia, in 1865, by Sergeant Boston Corbett. Yet Booth is seen today in Texas. Last year he was in London, England. Tomorrow he is liable to be seen at the opera in New York City. Quantrell, the infamous Confederate guerrilla, was killed in Kentucky, shortly after the war. He crops up every year or two in some outlandish place.

Consider, then, Jim Chapman. When we were boys we heard about a bandit named Jim Chapman; he robbed the first bank that was ever held up in broad daylight—he stopped and robbed the first train that was ever robbed. Ten years ago we read dime novels around this same Jim Chapman. We grew up on his thrilling adventures. We rode with Jim and Clem Tancred, Hutch Tompkins, Dick Wood and all the others of this band. We fought the Vickers detectives with Chapman.

We are still riding with Chapman. Alan Vickers is an old man and he is still searching for Chapman. At least, so the newspapers tell us.

But as for us, we no longer believe the Jim Chapman myth. We don't believe there is—if there ever was—a Jim Chapman. The bottle of milk is missing from a man's doorstep. Who stole it? Why, none other than Jim Chapman. The Bank of St. Albans, Vermont, is robbed of a hundred thousand dollars. Who did it? Jim Chapman.

A band of Sioux are wiped out in Dakota. Jim Chapman and his band killed them. The next day an isolated settlement is raided, probably by the Sioux in retaliation for the slaughter of their tribesmen, but who is blamed for this second outrage? Jim Chapman.

To have done one-tenth of the things for which Jim Chapman is blamed, he must be a hundred years old and he must be at least twenty men. All of them devils. . . ."

A hundred years old? Jim Chapman was thirty and it was fourteen years since Lawrence; nine since he had returned from the war, the last Clay County soldier to come in.

Jim Chapman had become a legend. Clem Tancred, more absurdly bookish than ever, brought the magazine article to Chapman and chuckled as the latter read it. "You see, Jim, we're not human beings. We 're devils or something."

For a long time after reading the piece in the magazine, Chapman made no comment. When he did remark on it, he said merely: "Maybe they printed it a little too soon."

"How come, Jim?"

Chapman shrugged. "We're long overdue. Our generation has passed us."

"Well," said Clem Tancred, "all I know is that my rheumatism bothers me these cold, damp nights and that I'd just as soon sit by the fire at home and read. Maybe I'll retire after the Northport job."

Clem would not retire. None of them would. They would go on until the end. The legend already spoke of them in the past tense.

Which was as it should be.

CHAPMAN'S life was in the past. The only part of it that had mattered at all had been eight years ago. His marriage to Evelyn had lasted five months. And they had been terrible months. He had watched the light in her eyes grow dim and die altogether. He had tried so

desperately to keep it alive, and he had failed.

They had lived on the Iowa farm one month. During that brief period, Jim Chapman had known the sweat of honest toil. He ploughed and he planted. He worked all day in the fields and he was tired and laughed when he went to the cool, whitewashed house at noon and in the evening.

Evelyn kept the house as scrubbed as had her German predecessor. She sang while she worked and a glow came to her cheeks.

Chapman almost forgot.

Then came the man purporting to be from the harvester company. He came out into the field and talked with Chapman about harvesting and almost forgot to show his photographs and sales literature. He knew less about farming than Chapman.

Chapman said nothing to Evelyn. Two days later came the man applying for work, willing to work for less even than Chapman paid Hans Schnabel. He went away and the day following there arrived the two men from the farm paper. Chapman had a fine farm. How long had he been a farmer?

Chapman turned his team of horses over to Hans and walked to the house.

Evelyn was taking a cake from the big oven of the stove. He watched her a moment, his eyes bleak, then he said, "It's come, Evelyn."

Startled, she set the cake pan on the top of the stove. He saw the fear in her eyes and his throat constricted so that he could scarcely whisper.

"We've got to go."

She bowed her head and went to their bedroom. She came out a few minutes later with a bag already packed.

"I kept it packed," she said bravely.

The train went to St. Paul, so they bought tickets to the end of the line. In St. Paul a heavy-set man with a beard was leaning against a pillar watching all the people who got off the train.

Chapman hired a rig and they went to Minneapolis. They got a train there to Madison, Wisconsin. Near Madison they rented a small house on Monona Lake and lived as tourists. For a month, until the summer season started and too many neighbors moved in along the lake.

They went to Springfield, Illinois, and from there to St. Louis and down the river to Nashville. They stayed in Nashville at a hotel until their room was searched one day in their absence.

Louisville next, then Pittsburgh and finally New York.

CHAPMAN got a job as a stevedore at the docks. On his third day of employment, a fat man came along with a pocketful of greenbacks.

"Sure and you're votin' the Republican ticket," he said to Chapman, as he had said to all the dockwallopers along the line. "It's open house at Paddy's Saloon and it's General Grant we want in the White House to teach them damned Confederates that they was nothin' but black traitors and as such they should be treated."

Chapman took the dollar and the cigar the man handed to him. He tore the dollar in half and threw it into the fat man's face. The cigar he ground under his foot.

The fat man's pair of thugs leaped upon Chapman. He knocked one of them off the dock into the water and was giving the second one the beating of his life when the politician yelled for the police.

The desk sergeant at the precinct house owed his soft job to the party. "A Confed'rate, are you, me lad? New York ain't the place for Confed'rates. We'll let you cool off until the returns are in and Gen'ral Grant has become our president."

Chapman spent the night in a cell and was not released until late the next afternoon. He walked as fast as he could to the house on Sixteenth Street.

When she saw him, Evelyn fainted.

Later, revived, she said to him, "It was a mistake, Jim. I thought I could go through with it, but I can't. I can't bear to see you step out of the house, for fear you'll never come back. I can't sleep at night, because I hear sounds in the house. I can't walk down the street without thinking someone is following you. Jim, I want to go home."

(To be continued)

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

WITH a good deal of pleasure we introduce Eustace Adams to you in this issue. His yarns are undoubtedly familiar to many of you. Now we bring him to the Camp-Fire as one of the Writers' Brigade, ask him to say something, and here is what he says:

Having been a listener at the outer edges of the Camp-Fire for more years than you can get me to admit, I now rise and bow humbly as my name is called by the mug who conducts the meetings. *Saludo!*

Practically my first memory is of looking out at the snow and sleet of the Maine town in which I was born and saying, "I wish I were somewhere else!" And that wish has hagged me ever since. No matter where I am, and I have been a lot of places, I usually find myself wishing I were somewhere else. In many a pub, bistro, cantina and bar I have tossed one down to the toast, "Anywhere but here." What is that old wheeze about the next pasture always being greener? The trouble is, it usually isn't, but one always hopes. And has to see for himself.

I've knocked about a bit, here and there, and I've *been* knocked about more than a bit, too. I've been sculleryman on a coastwise steamer, deckhand on a towboat, ship news reporter, automobile salesman, advertising salesman, copy-writer in an advertising agency, managing editor of a magazine and, for the past dozen years, a writer of fiction.

I wore one uniform or another during most of the first World War, going over to drive an ambulance in February, 1915. I came home to get into a National Guard uniform at the time of the Mexican mobilization, being optimistic enough to think that scrap was going to amount to something. Nothing much happening, went back to France and again drove ambulances. When the U. S. got into the war, came home again and enlisted as Seaman 2c, for aviation duty and helped carry practically all the lumber used in building the Naval Air Stations at Bay Shore and Key West. Griped so hard and so loud that they finally got rid of me by giving me my wings and a single gold stripe. Only real bright spot of ensuing service flying coast patrol was when I was first flyer to appear at spot where U. S. S. San Diego went down off Westhampton, L. I., after having hit a German mine. Landed to pick up what I thought was a swimming gob. It wasn't. My engine conked and I couldn't get up again. I thought the Heinie sub was still hanging around and for an hour or so I wondered how the food and liquor, if any, would taste in a German prison camp. Finally a destroyer came along and cut circles around me until I lifted the old crate from the water.

Have wandered about a fairish bit but wings now somewhat clipped by a wife and three kids. I write about the things I've seen and done, and about the things mugs I've known have seen and done. I fly now and then and sail whenever I can get away from my typewriter. Often in the afternoon when it comes on highball time some of the old-timers drop in, for I live at one of the many cross roads of the world—Miami Beach. Over

our second or third tall one somebody lifts his glass and says, "Anywhere but here!" And then it's tough not to put my toothbrush in my pocket and say, "Let's go". Now and then I do just that. But not often enough, now.

But who knows the future? By the looks of this morning's paper I might be seeing the old-timers again before long. It's a big world, but I'd know just where to find them, those who are still alive and looking for trouble.

Hasta luego, amigos!

HERE'S an oldtimer for you to meet, a plainsman coming through with a bit of fiction after a long and varied life in the West and fame in numerous active directions. We think few men have ridden into more strange towns and stopped at more waterholes than this one—Eugene Stebbings, also known as Couteau Gene. He says:

Hoh Kola: *Pateau washta!* Or, to you who have not ridden the North Ranges; Lo Friend: Fire Good! A long time I have not warmed by it, yet from the days of the far-back fathers I have come, at times, to sit by it. Many of you were not yet born when first I came, even some of you who have hair on your faces. Twenty and One-hundred moons it has been since I last came to this fire on the back of the greatest horse the North Range ever knew, Swayback the Gentle and Fast.

And now I come to tell you of the King of the Wild Cattle, also a great warrior and a gentleman whom a cruel custom made an *orejana*, an outlaw. Neither swayback or the Orejana are children of my brain. Both lived, as surely as the Wild West lived.

Captain Gardner, during the Moon of New Life (April of this year), told you I am an "old plainsman who makes throwing-knives". He did not tell it all. Perhaps you will not want me near you by the fire. I am a "trick-gunner", one of those who, so Wyatt Earp told his biographer: "are yellow and no good."

In the old days, there was another "trick-gunner" who ranged not far from where The Old King ranged. He was a United States marshal and when he was old he became a member of *Ask Adventure's* staff, "Old Billy" Wells. Billy took the Long Trail some years ago. Before he left he said: "I'll have a Camp-fire roaring bright for you, Couteau." And now, at times, I think I see the red reflection of Old Billy's fire upon the Western sky. And "Packer Jack", a trick-gunner of

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slip-hammer fame, the hero of the White Pass, and J. D. O'Meara, old time trick-gunner Marshal of Lead have gone to Billy's fire. They, too, call back to me: "Come on!"

Bill Cody, for whom I rode and threw knives and trick-gunned in '93, went on before. Col. Zack Miller of the roaring 101—went on—sometimes I put on the 101 Ranch hat he gave me in 1897. Harry Tracey, my pard during the second Cripple Creek Gold Rush, went orejana, got tired of it and cashed his own last white chip. All of the old trick-gunner breed, except myself, have cashed their chips. And now, during the long days, I sit and write and write. But at night! I am free to ride again. I buckle on my guns and mount a bronc and ride—ride back into the past. Some night I'll *not* come back. The great Camp-fire for adventurers burns eternally in the Happy Hunting Grounds. Your'n.

"Couteau Gene" Stebbings.

OIL wells? James P. Olsen has worked around a few, there and yonder.

I'd like to come down out of the derrick and warm myself at the Camp-fire. Regarding my past—I have hopes for the future. Born thirty-some years ago in ol' Kaintuck. At tender years played in such tear-squeezers as *Squaw Man,* etc. and was Mary Jane in *Buster Brown!*

Grandpa on my maw's side was pioneer in Oklahoma land rush, I grew up among Injuns, cows and oil. Later, much later, after finishing high school at fifteen—worked in oilfields. "Made" the big booms, alas! of which those days are over in the oil business. Ranger and Breckenridge, Texas, called me. Drifted through the fields of Wyoming and Montana, after a short session on an Oklahoma ranch. Did a few fence rows on Montana range, then back to the oil fields of Cromwell and Slick City, Oklahoma. Was roustabout, gangpusher, pump-man and gas engine trouble shooter. On to Smackover, Arkansas.

Went up in a derrick one day and came down the straight way when it pulled in. Fell some seventy feet to the floor. Heard one man yell, as he ran toward the derrick: "Three-to-one Jimmy ain't dead!" Somebody took the bet. I had to live, and did. Went to work on newspapers after that.

Did features, sports, then oil. Boomed on papers. Was in Amarillo and Borger, Texas. Quit the oil page after being staff correspondent for some two rival wire services (at the same time!) and a couple dozen papers. Worked as warehouseman, then, for

an oil company and started writing stories.

Drifted to the Pacific northwest, back to California—Laguna Beach. Still here, happily married and happier to appear in *Adventure*, after having failed to do so with more than a thousand published stories to my credit.

I see my breeze is fanning smoke into the eyes of that big hombre across the fire. Adiosita, hang 'em on the wrench, thirty—in other words, so long.

—James P. Olsen

P.S. The Mole was a real, living person, and was lowered down the big hole to save a child. But upstairs in a derrick, he would freeze and have to be taken down.

IT WAS six or so years ago that your editor came to this magazine. At that time he seemed to be a pretty sensible fellow.

But in those six years he's read about many kinds of men. He's liked them so well in these pages that they must have got under the layer of rhinoceros hide that every editor is supposed to have instead of a human epidermis.

In all this time he's never printed a story about a hero figuring out where he'll be in twenty years if he compounds his interest quarterly. There's been a complete lack of yarns about men consulting their insurance agents on how to make their deaths more profitable than their lives. It may be that the daily dealing in our kind of manuscripts can breed a state of recklessness.

For a long time this editor has had a boat, or rather a series of boats, each one with more work to do on it than the one before.

Recently the boat has been acting in a strange manner. No matter how it is anchored, it swings until the bowsprit points south.

This seems to be an omen.

If that boat insists on going south, who is going to keep her off the sand bars? Who is going to turn in a reef when the mast complains? The problem demanded to be faced squarely.

A tough problem for the eminently sensible fellow who came here six years ago. Damn that boat anyhow! But we trust no other man to handle her. There's only one answer to the question of who'll take her south.

She needed a little more ballast, and a typewriter stowed in the bilge seemed to help her trim a bit.

The floorboards are nailed down over the cursed instrument, but there is a prybar to get the floor up if the fish won't bite. How edible that typewriter will prove to be, we don't know. Gosh, brother, we wish we did have the answer to that one. The machine looks hopeless to fry or roast, but maybe a long slow stewing will soften it up into alphabet soup.

In these paragraphs we're taking leave of some mighty good fellows—here in the office, out yonder at the fiction typewriters, still farther out in the ranks of readers. But not completely taking leave—we know, like our own birthday, the date when this magazine goes on sale. We'll reach a newsstand on that day and preserve some sense of contact. There are a good many roots in our pleasant association with this magazine.

Now we'll move on to an important question. Who's going to run this magazine for us to read?

It's a happy thing to report the answer is such a "natural", as you will see.

More than thirty years ago *Adventure Magazine* was conceived, founded and edited through its formative year or two by a noted editor, Trumbull White.

Five years before Trumbull White launched this magazine, he launched a son named Kenneth. The son followed his bent strongly in three directions—catching trout, canoe trips on Canada's rivers, and editing magazines.

Kenneth White comes to this job with a background of ten years of successful editing and magazine management—and a particular pride and zeal in carrying on what the old man started.

An old personal friend, we feel very confident about our new editor. What we've tried to do, he's going to do better. He's got to show the old man.

This being our last log on the old Camp-Fire (unless maybe we report to our new editor on those sandbars, or how well a typewriter serves as an anchor with a line bent on to its front bumper) we'll move out now and sit down among the readers.

Good luck all round.

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

THE oldtime Pennsylvania gunsmith had a job on his hands when he took a bar of iron and set out to make it into a rifle.

Request:—The other night a hunter friend and I were talking and the conversation came around as it usually does to guns. Neither of us could figure out how the early guns were made. I read someplace about how an old gunsmith took a bar of iron and made a barrel out of it. Something about running water through the barrel when it was nearly finished for about a week or month. How do you think they got the hole in the bar of iron?

—Fred Piper, Reynoldsville, Pa.

Reply by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—In making the muzzleloading arms, first a bar of iron was heated, and welded, an inch or less at a weld, about a mandrill, like winding a ribbon about your finger. This was done till the desired length of rough barrel was made, when the bore was reamed, polished, the outside filed or ground down to the finish desired, generally octagon, and then the bored barrel was rifled, threaded at the rear for the breech plug, sight and ramrod pipe slots cut, and the barrel then colored, generally by a rusting process that gave a nice brown finish, the formula being lost now.

Next, the lock was either made by hand, plate, springs, sear and hammer, or as was the general practice, a ready made lock made and sold by Eastern or even European makers, was prepared. The stock was next made, with the aid of augur, rasp, chisel, and plane, fitted to the barrel, and after that the lock was inlet, and the guard and buttplate attached, the wood was polished and finished, then hand rubbed with some sort of oil.

Damascus barrels were made by welding strips of steel and iron together, twisting them when red hot to make a nice figure, like we see in old shotguns today, and then welding them around the mandrill, as described above, this generally being done only for shotguns, but in a few cases, on expensive rifles also.

Next, the mould was made, or bought, the sights set for some certain range, sixty or a hundred yards by actual firing, and the rifle was ready for its future owner's hands. I have a few of these old arms in my humble collection, I may add. Most of them were made in the Eastern part of your home State. Captain J. G. W. Dillin, of Media, is the greatest living authority on the muzzleloading rifle today, and has written a book on them, "The Kentucky Rifle."

LETTING the migratory birds do your travelling for you—here's a stay-at-home hobby.

Request:—For some time I have been in-

terested in bird life, and somewhere along the line I have been advised that there is a movement to catalog and band migratory birds.

Will you please advise me if this is so and where I might obtain the necessary materials, as I feel it would be a very interesting hobby. Should you have at your disposal any information as to the method of trapping birds for this purpose it would also be appreciated.

—W. K. Bingham, Reynoldsburg, Ohio.

Reply by Mr. Davis Quinn:—If you intend to do banding, you must first obtain a permit from the U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey, Washington, D. C., and also I believe your own state dept. of Conservation at Columbus may require a permit. The Bureau of Biological Survey will supply you with instructions, a supply of bands and reports. In writing, ask for the name and address of the present secretary of the Eastern Bird Banding Association, their bulletins are worth receiving.

You must make your own traps, or buy them. Traps are advertised in the above bulletins, and you will find plans and directions therein if you desire to construct them.

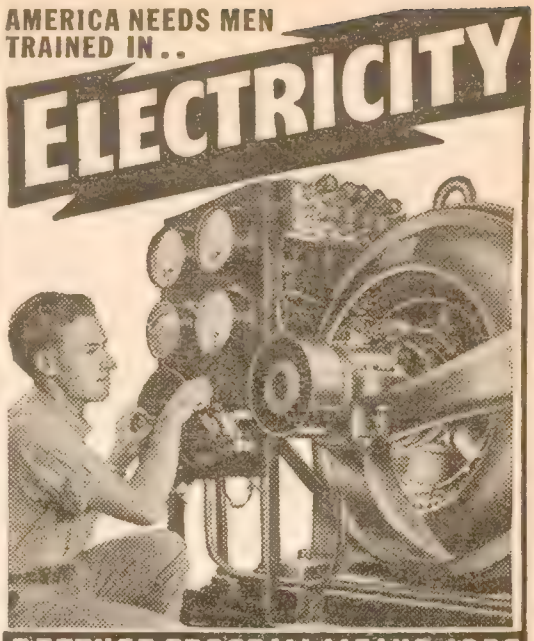
There are of course different type traps for each of the various bird groups. To go in for banding, you must be prepared to correctly identify each species, to maintain persistently accurate and complete data regarding all individuals banded, and to watch the traps closely at all times. You will be kept busy designing new traps and experimenting with new baits, so you can see that this game is no loafer's hobby.

Crows, hawks and owls may be taken in common steel traps of appropriate size with padded jaws, or of course in box or basket traps if it is possible to lure them that far. Hawks will decoy to a stuffed owl mounted in a conspicuous place; the wings should be hinged so as to flap when pulled by a concealed string. This will bring crows as well. I am not sure how to lure owls; these are nocturnal, mostly mouse feeders. The ducks are another story. It is altogether a most fascinating game, full of surprises and great interest and at the same time the pursuit of banding can be a useful ornithological work.

Write also the Supt. of Documents, Washington, D. C., for: MANUAL FOR BIRD BANDERS, Miscell. Pub. No. 58, Dept. Agriculture, 1929. And good luck!

WHEN catching poisonous snakes—be careful not to hurt the snake!

Request:—Both capturing snakes alive and studying their habits is a hobby of mine and



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I pursue it vigorously although I have a lot to learn.

I would like to know where you can purchase snake capturing equipment and snake cages.—William J. Warren, Wilmington, Del.

Reply by Mr. Cifford Pope:—There is not much on the market in the way of snake catching equipment. As far as I know no one makes snake cages. Just buy ordinary aquaria and terraria at any pet or aquarium store. Better yet make your own from good boxes.

The hand is the best instrument to use in catching snakes that are harmless. A glove helps when the snake being caught is vicious. In catching poisonous kinds two instruments are helpful but there is always considerable danger of hurting the specimens unless great care is used. One of these is made by attaching an ordinary angle iron to the end of a short stick and wrapping the business end of the iron with adhesive tape to keep the edges from cutting the snake. This instrument is useful in pulling snakes out of their defensive coils as well as in pinning them down. Many collectors use it alone. The other is a noose instrument of some sort. A rather stiff strap is attached by one end to a short stick, brought up the side under a row of metal arches which allow it to slide freely, and terminated at the handle end of the stick. A snake caught by this contraption should quickly be put in a bag before it has a chance to injure itself.

If you don't want to make these yourself, Ross Allen, Silver Springs, Florida ("Florida Reptile Institute") will sell you snake catching instruments. But try your hand at making your own.

I advise you to read my *Snakes Alive* because it is written expressly for those who are interested in snakes in a non-professional way.

It is available at most libraries and bookstores.

If you want detailed information about special kinds of American snakes ask for books by Raymond L. Ditmars. His *Snakes of the World* is well worth reading.

POKING up the coast to Alaska.

Request:—In "Ask Adventure" I came across your name under boating and trapping.

I am planning a trip to Southeast Alaska, which I would like to make by outboard motor boat from Seattle. My partner and I are going for the hunting and trapping. We are taking one ton of foodstuffs and supplies for nine months.

My questions are: 1. How large would this boat have to be? 2. What kind and horsepower outboard motor? 3. How fast will this boat go? 4. How many miles to the gallon of gasoline? 5. This trip is 1200 miles. How many gallons of gasoline will it take? 6. How much will a good second-hand boat and motor of your choice cost?

—Philip R. Bartick, Canal Zone.

Reply by Mr. Raymond S. Spears:—The Indians up the Coast used canoes of all sizes from small to war-canoe, from one family to 40-man or so. But they were watermen, familiar with conditions—experts.

Your boat would have to carry the cargo, 2500 lbs. or so, and my suggestion would be to get a professional fisherman's outfit, or perhaps a life-saving or naval tender or other Government built boat auctioned off for age, defect, old model, etc.

You could get two 10-horse outboards. But I wouldn't pass up the inboard motor, because in such a large craft the inboard, power for power, would serve better. The outboard is adaptable, transferable, and in its scope a most wonderful invention. But for deep-sea work the inboard would probably serve you better. If you figure on using a tender, a small outboard would drive a 16-foot skiff.

Write to Alaskan Representative, Washington, D. C., for laws, and living, hunting, fishing and fur-taking conditions.

Also Supt. Public Documents, Washington, D. C., for Alaska Report lists, covering forests, wild life, fishing, living, mining (prospecting).

Trapping will perhaps enable you to break even, getting your winter living. This is dependent on luck, knowledge of trapping there, and conditions during winter. A wildcrafter may make winter living trapping, summer living fishing, or getting a job—if any.

The mileage of gasoline gallonage depends entirely on the motor—no two motors are exactly alike. 6 or 8 miles an hour—perhaps 10 miles a gallon—and an outboard calls for cans of gasoline, oil. An inboard, the tank is built in. Gasoline in cans can roll around, leak. Probably best to buy gasoline along way.

U. S. Hydrographic Survey, Washington, D. C., get charts of the route Seattle to Alaska destination. They'll show the way, and lights, etc.

The cost of a boat will depend. I'm tempted to say $300 or so. Yet a man has just made the trip in a boat he brought in on a trailer and apparently he'd never seen a boat till he built this one.

Nothing absurd about your ideas.

Marten, foxes, fisher, mink, ermine, otter, etc., among potential furs. Traps are not very expensive. Write Animal Trap Co., Lititz, Penna., for price lists. Kind and number depends on what animals you know how to trap.

In this kind of an adventure one needs to keep the mind open and be ready to notice other lines available, so that failure of one resource will be met by picking up something else.

Write Chamber of Commerce, Seattle, Washington, asking for list of boat builders and dealers (small boats, including commercial fishing).

Yours—And good luck.

GETTING into the F.B.I.—it's a tough job and tough to get.

Request:—I am an operating Engineer, 27 years of age, born in California, and do not have a high school diploma. Would you be kind enough to advise me what steps are necessary to get in the U. S. Investigation Department.

Would I need more schooling? Could I take a civil service examination? Could I get some books for this type of position? If not, how would I be able to get in this field, which has been my lifelong ambition?

—J. F. P., San Francisco, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Francis H. Bent:—I'm afraid you have no chance for joining the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Their requirements are pretty rigid.

Applicant must be a citizen of the U. S.; between 25 and 35 years old, inclusive; willing to serve where directed; have at least 2 years commercial experience in the legal, accounting or business fields; be a graduate from (a) a recognized school of law, or (b) a recognized school of accounting and able to qualify on the witness stand and in the practical accounting field as an expert, or (c) have had extensive investigational or law-enforcement experience; in the very best of health and physical condition; pass strict physical examinations; be well proportioned as to height and weight; have no conspicuous physical oddities.

Your only chance would be to take a course in accounting, receive your diploma, and then get your two years of experience. This would mean five or six years before you could qualify.

You might write the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U. S. Department of Justice, Washington, D. C. The F. B. I. is being expanded under the present war threats and their requirements may possibly be loosened a bit.

GOING into the jungles of Darien—to catch blue morpho butterflies.

Request:—I have been planning a trip into the Panamaian jungles around the district of Darien. Though it may sound absurd, I had hoped to live off the land and with friendly Indians.

From other sources, I am told that mosquitoes, a type of wasp and other forms of insect life, disease-carrying, etc., make life almost intolerable, not to mention dangerous.

Is this condition true? If so, what antidotes are there for the different fevers one might contract?

Could you tell me anything about the Blue Morpho butterfly as to a possible source of revenue, capture, preservation and sale?

Any information regarding this or any subject relating to Panama will be appreciated.

—J. P. Evans, Jr., Arden Route, San Angelo, Tex.

Reply by Dr. S. W. Frost:—Mosquitoes are a serious problem in Panama and transmit malaria and yellow fever. If you live in the vicinity of natives, the danger will be even more grave because these diseases are transmitted from other patients by means of the mosquito. Remember that the natives can withstand more than the white man. Mosquitoes can be avoided because they fly only at night and on dark rainy days. Sleep at night under mosquito bar.

There is danger in drinking water especially about native villages. It should be boiled or treated with halazone tablets. It is also dangerous to eat raw vegetables such as celery or lettuce, unless you are sure of their source. Dysentery may be contracted from raw vegetables as well as from water. Food furnished in the Canal Zone, however, is rigidly inspected by our government and is always safe.

Red bugs and ticks are exceeding unpleasant because of their bites and may become serious because of infections which sometimes follow their bites. Cleanliness is the secret to avoid unpleasant experiences with these creatures. Daily baths with good soap suds will wash away most of the red bugs before they have an opportunity of digging into the flesh. Ticks should be removed daily. Ticks attach themselves by means of their mouth parts and it is best not to pull them off for it leaves the head imbedded in the flesh and eventually causes considerable irritation. A little chloroform applied on cotton to the tick will cause him to release his hold and he can be removed without difficulty. If they are not attached, bees wax or adhesive tape is convenient to remove them. They adhere to these materials and are thus readily removed.

For information on collecting and preserving insects, especially moths and butterflies, I suggest that you write the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for a copy of Farmer's Bulletin 1601. Farmer's Bulletins are free.

Morphos in good condition bring about $1.50 retail. Supply houses probably pay about fifty cents a piece. Many of the morphos that one collects in the jungles are not perfect. If you learn their feeding habits and their habit of hiding by folding the brilliant wings above the body you will have greater success in collecting these moths.

There are excellent hospitals in Panama City if for any reason you need medical attention. There is an excellent library at Balboa Heights in the Canal Zone intended for the Canal Zone workers but you can no doubt make arrangements to use this library. The U. S. Department of Agriculture maintains an entomological laboratory on the Amador Road, Balboa. You may be able to obtain assistance from some of the workers at this laboratory.

Life in the Jungles of Panama is not as hazardous as it is often painted but one must take care of himself. If you have good health and are accustomed to the woods you will have little difficulty.

HERE'S another one from the same man—he is going into this thoroughly.

Request:—For some time I have been planning a trip into Panama, and when and if I go, it is my intention of staying at least nine months. Naturally I will be forced to develop my own pictures. I know nothing of developing or the kind of equipment I would need—something lightweight.

What steps would you suggest that I take to educate myself along these lines?

—R. Evans, Jr., Arden Route, San Angelo, Tex.

Reply by Mr. Paul L. Anderson:—The first thing for you to do is to establish relations with the U. S. War Department, and find out exactly what you may and may not do with a camera in Panama; also, provide yourself with any necessary identifications and permits. Otherwise, if you are found taking photographs around Panama, and especially in the neighborhood of the Canal Zone, you will have a fine chance to see what the inside of a military prison looks like.

Then write to the Service Department of the Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester,

New York, and ask if their Monitor Six-20 will stand the climate of Panama. If it will, that is the camera I would recommend; if not, the only other camera you can get in this country which will do so is the Zeiss Contax. I do not advise the Contax unless you cannot use the Monitor, since the processing of 35-mm. film, especially in the tropics, is no job for a beginner.

Also ask the E. K. Co. for full information about the tropical processing of film. They will send you a booklet on the subject, gratis. And ask them whether or not they have a D & P plant in Panama City; if they have, by all means send your films there to be developed, rather than try to do it yourself; tropical processing is a tough job for an expert, and almost impossible for a beginner.

As to equipment, you will need

(1) A camera.

(2) A ray-filter. The most generally useful is the Wratten K-2.

(3) A lens hood. You can get a Kodak hood to fit your camera, so arranged that the filter can be slipped into it.

(4) A tripod. The collapsible metal ones are mostly too light to be much use; preferable is the Crown No. 1.

(5) An exposure meter. The Burroughs Wellcome Notebook and Exposure Guide costs 75c; the Expophot costs $1.75. Either one is quite accurate enough for your work, and neither of them gets out of order. Therefore either is preferable to a photo-electric meter, costing around $20, and likely to go bad just when you need it most.

(6) Films. For general use, I would recommend the Eastman Super XX. Have them factory packed, in sealed tin boxes; do not open a box until you are ready to load the film into the camera; make your exposures as quickly as possible, then load the film back into the tin box, together with a half a teaspoonful or so of talcum powder. Develop at the earliest possible moment. In all tropical work, the film should be put through the camera and the processing with the least possible delay; in bad climatic conditions, a film may be ruined if left for two hours in the camera, and any delay in processing is worse.

If you are going to do your own processing, you will need, in addition to the above:

(7) A tank. I like the Albert best, but the Perplex, Jobo, Fink-Roselieve, Kodak, and Nikor are all good. It must be one of the kind in which the film is wound on a rack without the backing paper; the kind in which the film winds on a celluloid apron, like the old Kodak tank, cannot be used in the tropics.

(8) Chemicals. Use the Kodak packaged chemicals, rather than attempt to make up your own solutions from bulk chemicals.

(9) Graduates, stirring rod, etc. You can

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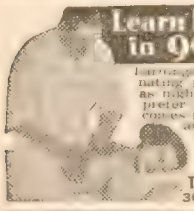

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decide what apparatus of this sort to take, but keep the bulk down as much as possible.

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HORSE cavalry in modern warfare—how much use is it?

Request:—I am a member of the National Guard Cavalry and upon numerous occasions I have been cross-examined as to the usefulness of horse cavalry and its place in modern warfare. I am of the firm belief that mechanization has not and will not replace horse cavalry and upon this point I am often ridiculed.

I would appreciate it if you would be kind enough to give me your opinion on the above question and if you have any knowledge of the use of horse cavalry in the Spanish war or the Polish conflict or the present war I would like you to tell me of it and of its success.

I realize that this is a rather broad question bun I am in hope that you will be able to find time and material to help me so that I may dispute the question that the days of the horse in modern warfare are numbered.

—Charles W. Fielding, Philadelphia, Pa.

Reply by Major Glen R. Townsend:—It is difficult to answer your question concerning the future of horse cavalry. It must be admitted that horse cavalry has not played any important role in the present war in Europe and does not seem likely to do so. Poland had a considerable amount of horse cavalry which, so far as available information shows, was useless against the mechanized cavalry of Germany. I think it safe to say that horse cavalry will not again be an important factor in large modern wars.

In small wars in the sparsely settled regions of the earth, however, horse cavalry may still find a place. We may hear of cavalry as the present war spreads to northern Africa and Asia Minor. Possibly by the time this reaches you the news reports from the southern front

will have answered your question with greater authority than I could hope to do.

DYNASTIES that are dead, and books that are not.

Request:—Could you give me a list of Mayan and Aztec rulers with approximate date of their reign?

Would you give me a list of books dealing with these as well as other Pre-Columbian civilization in Central and South America?

—W. E. Little, Dallas Center, Iowa

Reply by Arthur Woodword:—To list the rulers of the Aztecs and the Maya is a bit of a task; however, I can tell you the dates for nine Nahuan rulers. This is the list as given by Prof. Marshal H. Saville in his publication "Tizoc—Great Lord of the Aztecs," The Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation Contributions Vol. VII, No. 4, N. Y 1929, p. 18:

Ruler	Throned	Died
Acamapichtli	1375 A.D.	1396
Huitzihuitl	1396	1417
Chimalpopoca	1417	1427
Itzcoatl	1427	1440
Montezuma (the Elder)	1440	1469
Axayecttl	1469	1481
Tizoc	1481	1486
Ahuitzotl	1486	1502
Montezuma (the Younger)	1502	1520

Cuitlahuac, brother of Montezuma, ruled after him for 40 days and died of small pox.

Cuauhtemoc, eleventh and last Aztec ruler; he was murdered by the Spaniards in 1520.

In regard to the Mayan rulers our information is even less specific. If you will obtain a copy of "Landa's Yucatan 1549-1579," edited by Wm. Gates, The Maya Society, Baltimore, 1937, you will find some references to ruling families. This is the second edition in English of this well known work and may be purchased from the Maya Society for $10.

A handy little book for you to get and read will be "Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America," by Herbert J. Spinden, American Museum of Natural History, New York City, 1928.

This contains a good bibliography for a beginner and as you progress you will encounter other works and gradually move up into the latest publications. An excellent item in English is "Ancient Mexico" by Bernardino de Sahagun, translated and edited by Fanny Bandelier. This item, the Land and the True History of the Conquest of New Spain by Bernal Dias del Castillo, translated and issued in five volumes by the Hakluyt Society, A. P. Maudslay, editor and translator, will give you the sources for beginning the study of the Aztecs and Mayas.

TICKLISH business—but you're out of bullet range while it happens.

Request:—I have in my possession an old Manhattan cap-and-ball pistol which up until a few years ago was in the possession of my father. It belonged to Carl Schurz.

Getting back to the subject, I was wondering if you could inform me a manner in getting the shells which are corroded in out. Also some way to take the rust off.

—Danny Friedman, Watertown, Wisc.

Reply by Ol' Man Wiggins:—In response to yours of the recent date, I'll say that there are several ways of removing the charge from the old Manhattan pistol. I'm assuming it to be a cap-and-ball revolver, like my own.

The way I'd go about it would be to first drive out the little wedge just forward of the cylinder, under the barrel, and withdraw the barrel from the frame by working the rammer gently against the front of the cylinder, with the hammer halfcocked, and the cylinder so turned that a space between the chambers is in place for the rammer to bear upon.

After removing the cylinder, dig a hole in the earth, wrap the cylinder in some oil soaked papers, and after placing it in the hole, say a foot in depth, light the upper papers and get away for an hour. I think this will fire the charges into the earth without damage.

In case it's a cartridge arm, and the cartridges are set solidly by corrosion, I'd take the gun to a gunsmith. If none is available, I think the best bet to soak it a few weeks in good kerosene oil, a practice I'd found useful to loosen rust. Rem Solvent is also fine, but a little expensive to submerge a gun in. Of course, it can be applied sparingly, and renewed every few days for a while. It loosens rust well, and I'm told that the auto compound known as "Spring-eze" does likewise. I feel sure one of these methods will serve you well.

Your mention of the former owner as Carl Schurz brought memories; my grandfather thought him second only to President Lincoln as a statesman. He knew him during the Civil War.

I trust this will serve you as well as did my advice to your friend.

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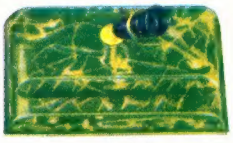

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